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"TROUBLED WATERS."

AN ORIGINAL COMEDY

IN FOUR ACTS.

—BY—

CHARLES THOMAS AND WALTER ELLIS.

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1918

CHARACTERS.

ARNOLD ERRINGTON . . . . . .

CYRIL TREHERNE . . . . . .

SIR CHARLES AISLABIE, BART. . . . .

MR. PARLBURY . . . . . .

DR. GERALD LANGTON . . . . . .

MARTIN . . . . . .

MRS. MATCHAM ROLLITT . . . . . .

MRS. PARLBURY . . . . . .

ETHEL PARLBURY . . . . . .

GLADYS AISLABIE . . . . . .

SCENES.

ACT I.

NAPLES. Sir Charles Aislabie's apartments; 12, Corso Victor Emmanuel. April.

ACT II.

DENETHORPE ABBEY. The Drawing Room. August.

ACT III.

THE FIRS. The Studio. September.

ACT IV.

NAPLES. Same as Act I. October.

(Four months are supposed to elapse between Acts I and II. A week between Acts II. and III., and a month between Acts III. and IV.)

TIME, - - PRESENT.

"TROUBLED WATERS."

ACT I.

SCENE:—*Furnished apartments in the Corso Victor Emmanuel, in Naples, in the occupation of* SIR CHARLES AISLABIE. *Picturesquely, but rather shabbily furnished, as if better days had been known. Doors L. C., R. I. E., and R. U. E. Window R. C., with balcony. A picture on an easel, covered by a curtain R.*

(*Enter* MARTIN, *ushering in* ERRINGTON *L. C.*)

Martin.—If you'll take a seat, sir, I will tell Sir Charles you're here.

Erring.—All right. (*Exit* MARTIN, R. I. E.) What does he want with me, I wonder? Would like to see me very particularly, his messenger said. I heard he was in low water.

(*Enter* SIR CHARLES, R.)

Sir C.—My dear Errington, I'm delighted to see you! In fact, hearing you were yachting in the Mediterranean, I've been on the lookout for you some time.

Erring.—That accounts for your message reaching me this morning, almost before the yacht's anchor was down. Now, what can I do for you?

Sir C.—You guessed that I wanted something?

Erring.—Well, yes, and I was very pleased that you thought of me.

Sir C.—That's very kindly said. Fact is, Errington, I'm in a difficulty.

Erring.—How much?

Sir C.—No, no, my boy, it's not that, for a wonder. (*Pause.*) You remember my little daughter, Gladys?

Erring.—Of course, and a dear child she was—

Sir C.—Ah! Her mother was an angel—too good for me and for this world—so she left it. Until Gladys grew up I devoted all my spare time to her; then she began to ask questions about my time that wasn't spare, so I sent her to school. This left me free to follow my social, sporting, and theatrical tastes—until a year ago, I did follow them pretty rapidly—then came the smash, and I had to sell the old place to pay my debts. With what was left I meant to settle down—somehow, I didn't. The result is, what you see—(*Going to picture on easel and drawing curtain.*) This is Gladys' portrait, she sent it me the other day.

Erring.—(*Starting involuntarily*) What a lovely face! And where is she now?

Sir C.—Where she has been for the last five years, at a convent, near Brussels, finishing her education. Her education is finished, and she's coming home, if you can call this home.

Erring.—When do you expect her?

Sir C.—To-day, at any moment.

Erring.—What a happiness for you!

Sir C.—Perhaps. As a child, Gladys was devoted to me; in her eyes, I have always been the incarnation of all that is good and noble. Now Errington, if she should ever find out what my life has really been, I shall look devilish small.

Erring.—Why should she ever find out?

Sir C.—Why? She's a woman.

Erring.—And is that the reason that you have kept her away from you all these years?

Sir C.—Ask yourself, my dear Errington, if the atmosphere, with which I am surrounded, is one fit for a young and innocent girl to breathe?

Erring.—(*Shortly*) Change the air.

Sir C.—Reform? (*Laughing bitterly.*) I have reformed. Circumstances have reformed me. But you can't touch pitch without being defiled, and the stuff clings, sir, clings damnably!

Erring.—My dear Sir Charles, I think you are too hard on yourself.

Sir C.—No, I'm not; you judge others by yourself, and can neither see nor believe in the seamy side of human nature. I do both, and I feel I'm not a fit and proper person to have charge of her.

Erring.—What do you propose to do?

Sir C.—Give her to someone who is a fit and proper person.

Erring.—You mean a husband, of course.

Sir C.—Yes, and of all the husbands that this world could offer, you, Arnold Errington, are the one I would choose.

Erring.—(*Staggered.*) I?

Sir C.—Yes. Come, what do you say to my proposal?

Erring.—My dear Sir Charles, what a word and a blow man you are! I have never thought seriously of marrying—

Sir C.—Time you did.

Erring.—(*Looking at picture.*) If Miss Aislabie's face be an index to her character—

Sir C.—(*As if hurt by the doubt expressed.*) If? After all, (*with a sigh*) she is almost as great a stranger to me as she is to you. But if it be?

Erring.—Then he will be a lucky man who wins her love!

Sir C.—Aha! And why shouldn't you be the lucky man?

Erring.—(*Dreamily, still looking at picture.*) The whole idea is so new to me.

Sir C.—Of course, of course. You must have time to know her, and appreciate her. (*Pause.*) There, we won't discuss the matter further now, but—think it over, my dear boy, think it over.

(*Enter* MARTIN, L. C.)

Martin.—(*To* SIR CHARLES :) A gentleman has called, sir, to know if Mr. Errington is ready.

Erring.—It's old Parlbury, my fellow traveller; may he come up?

Sir C.—By all means. (*to* MARTIN) Ask the gentleman up.

(*Exit* MARTIN.)

Erring.—He's a good old sort, Parlbury. Mad after antiquities, of which he believes himself an infallible judge. As a matter of fact, his ignorance on the subject would fill the British Museum. (*Enter* PARLBURY, L. C., *ushered in by* MARTIN, *who exits.* PARLBURY *carries a large jar under his left arm, rudely painted with birds and flowers.*) Come along, Parlbury, and let me introduce you to Sir Charles Aislabie.

Parl.—(*Entering, takes his hat off, and hangs it on the mouth of the jar, then holds his hand to* SIR CHARLES) Delighted, I'm sure! (*Shakes hands with* SIR CHARLES.)

Erring.—Why, what in the world have you got there?

Parl.—(*Putting jar with hat on it, on table carefully*) Aha! A treasure, my dear Errington, a real art treasure!

Erring—(*Taking up hat*) What, this?

Parl.—Don't be a fool. There (*admiringly*), a very perfect specimen of early Genoese pottery!

Erring.—(*Examining it*) Beautiful! And this, I presume, is an early Genoese bird, picking up an early Genoese worm?

Parl.—You're a Goth! Upon my word, Errington, I believe that even Mrs. Parlbury would have admired it.

(ERRINGTON *up stage.*)

Sir C.—Mrs. Parlbury! I met a Mrs. Parlbury when I was last at Denethorpe, some years since. She was very great on modern sanitation, I remember.

Parl.—Very likely, but I don't see much of her now.

Sir C.—Your sister-in-law, I presume?

Parl.—No, Sir Charles, my wife. (*Sighs.*)

Sir C.—(*Uncomfortable*) Indeed?—I—ah—(*not knowing what to say.*) Exactly.

Parl.—(*Confidentially.*) The fact is, Sir Charles, the paths of Mrs. Parlbury and myself have diverged of late years.

She was practical and modern, while I was artistic, and—

Erring.—Ancient.

Parl.—Don't you interrupt. I objected to her nineteenth century fads, and she sneered at my antiquarian tastes. So we separated. Ah! There's a lot of blanks in the matrimonial lottery!

Sir C.—There's an equal number of people always ready to dip their hands in.

Parl.—Which shows the natural tendency of mankind to make idiots of themselves. Why, there was Errington the other day with that widow at Malta——

Sir C.—(*Pricking up his ears*) Eh, what? What's that?

Erring.—(*Annoyed*) Oh, nothing!

Parl.—Nothing, indeed! Why, with your quixotic notions of honor and chivalry, I believe if I hadn't been there, you'd have married her out of pity!

Erring.—Nonsense! (*fuming*) It was a mere flirtation, nothing more. What an ass you are, Parlbury! Come, it's time we were off, the English post must be in.

Sir C.—Come back to lunch?

Erring.—It must depend on my letters. I may have to return to England this afternoon.

Sir C.—(*Disappointed*) This afternoon?

Parl.—Nonsense, Errington, I'm sure there will be no need to hurry away; you forget I've never been in Naples before.

Erring.—True (*with a glance at the portrait.*) I must not be selfish. (SIR CHARLES *secretly amused.*) So we'll be back to lunch, and you and Miss Aislabie must dine on board the yacht to-night. Come along, Parlbury (*going.*)

Sir C.—No, no, Mr. Parlbury looks tired.

Parl.—Ah! (*reseating himself.*)

Sir C.—And I'm sure he's thirsty.

Parl.—Ah-h-h!!

Sir C.—So he shall stop and have a glass of Chianti with me (*aside*)—and I'll pump him about the widow.

Erring.—Oh, all right.

Sir C.—You can get his letters for him, unless (*to* PARL-

BURY) you're expecting one from your wife, in which case, perhaps——

Parl.—(*Solemnly*) Sir Charles, it is some years since I gave up expecting anything from Mrs. Parlbury.

Erring.—(*Laughing*) Till lunch, then.

(*Exit* L. C.)

Sir C.—(*Going to carved oak cabinet* L., *and producing flask of Chianti and two glasses*) Malta much of a place for antiquarian or artistic research, Mr. Parlbury?

Parl.—No. I spent one very jolly day in the catacombs at Citta Vecchia, but otherwise I didn't do much in that line.

Sir C.—Then you weren't sorry to leave?

Parl.—Well, I don't know, there was very pleasant society there.

Sir C.—Ah, by the way, including the lovely widow, for I presume she was lovely?

Parl.—Speaking as only a slightly married man, Sir Charles, I give you my word she was superb! Such a presence, and for a modern production, such curves!

Sir C.—Oho! Then not all your devotion to art could prevent your falling a victim to the fascinations of nature. I wonder you could tear yourself away.

Parl.—I could and did for two reasons, one being that I discovered she knew Mrs. Parlbury—

Sir C.—(*Laughing*) Oh, Mr. Parlbury, I very much fear that incompatibility of temper was not the sole cause of the separation between you and your wife.

Parl.—You flatter me, but candor compels me to admit that there was no other. My second reason for going was as I have already hinted, because of Errington.

Sir C.—Ah! A regular case between them, eh?

Parl.—On her side, yes—not on his; but Errington is weak, deplorably weak, where women are concerned, and she'd have hooked him to a certainty if he hadn't been able to fall back on my experience.

Sir C.—Which is pretty extensive?

Parl.—Fairly so. As a means of acquiring a knowledge

of the sex, it is, if I may paraphrase Tennyson, better to have wed and parted, than never to have wed at all. But now I've trespassed quite long enough on your good nature and your Chianti (*turning flask up*), so I'll be off. (*Turns and sees* GLADYS *who has* ENTERED L. C.) Sir Charles.

Sir C.—Eh? What? (*Turns and sees* GLADYS.)

Gladys.—Father! (*Falteringly.*)

Sir C.—Gladys! My child.

Gladys.—(*Rushing into his arms.*) Father, dear Father!

Sir C.—My darling! So you've found your way here safely? Let's look at you. By George, how well you look, and how you've grown! Look here, Parlbury, what do you say to this, eh?

Parl.—Charming, Sir Charles, charming! Let art hide its diminished head before such nature as this! Ah! (*Sighing.*) If only I had thirty years less experience! My dear child, I'm delighted to make your acquaintance. She's not much like you, Sir Charles.

Sir C.—No. (*Sighing.*) She's the image of her mother.

Parl.—I've a daughter much about your age. (*To* GLADYS.)

Gladys.—(*Eagerly.*) Is she with you?

Parl.—Ahem! Not at present. (*Hesitatingly*). The fact is, Mrs. Parlbury's health obliges her to live principally in places which do not agree with me, so we arrange for Ethel to live six months of the year with her mother, and six months with me.

Gladys.—And now she's with Mrs. Parlbury?

Parl.—Yes, but I hope that one day you'll meet and be friends.

Gladys.—I've never had a girl friend; all the girls at the Convent are so stupid. What's she like?

Parl.—Like? Oh, the usual sort of thing you know, nothing out of the way.

Sir C.—Does she take after you?

Parl.—I believe she does when she's with Mrs. Parlbury, but when she's with me she reminds me strongly of her mother. (*Looking admiringly at* GLADYS.) Ah, Sir Charles, those eyes will do some damage in their time!

Sir C.—They haven't had a chance hitherto, eh, Gladys?

Gladys.—No, father. (*In a low tone.*)

Parl.—(*Aside.*) That sounds deucedly like "yes, father."

Sir C.—The male element rigidly excluded from the Convent?

Gladys.—Yes, father, (*As before.*)

Parl.—(*Aside.*) And that sounds uncommonly like "no, father." (*Aloud.*) Well, good bye for the present, I'll bring Errington back at one.

(*Exit*, L. C.)

Sir C.—Oh, Mr. Parlbury!

Parl.—(*Re-entering.*) I beg your pardon?

Sir C.—You've forgotten your Genoese pastry.

Parl.—(*Seizing jar.*) Pottery, Sir Charles, pottery!

(*Exit* MR. PARLBURY.)

Gladys.—I'm so glad to get you alone, father, dear father!

Sir C.—Ah, my dear child, I hope you will be comfortable. I'm afraid you'll find things a little rough.

Gladys.—Rough, not a bit: why, it's all quite luxurious after the Convent.

Sir C.—What, they didn't pamper you there?

Gladys.—No, indeed!

Sir C.—And are you glad to be back with your old father?

Gladys.—Very glad; but I won't have you call yourself old. I'm going to make you quite a smart young man again.

Sir C.—I don't know why you should care about me, Gladys. I can't have seemed a very affectionate father to you all these years.

Gladys.—Why, father, I feared at one time, that you did not love me as you used, but as I grew older, and began to understand things, I knew that it must be for my sake that you kept me away from you.

Sir C.—For your sake! (*Aside.*) Does she know me then!

Gladys.—Yes. Of course I don't know your reasons, but I suppose it had something to do with my education.

Sir C.—(*Catching at the idea.*) It had all to do with it. I was determined that your education should be the very best, because I knew that I should be able to leave you little or nothing beyond education.

Gladys.—Why, father, what do you mean?

Sir C.—I mean, Gladys, that luck has been dead against me; I am not only no longer rich, but devilish—ahem!—I mean exceedingly poor.

Gladys.—Oh, dear; and when did this happen?

Sir C.—(*Evasively.*) The date doesn't matter, the *fact* is the unpleasant part of it.

Gladys.—You dear father! I see it all! You have been poor a long while, and you would not have me home for fear that I should find it out, and know that you were denying yourself the comforts and luxuries to which you had been accustomed, in order to pay for my education?

Sir C.—(*Conscience-stricken.*) Nonsense, nonsense, my dear child! (*Aside, coming down stage.*) To play the hypocrite to one's own child!

Gladys.—(*Coming to him.*) I'm so sorry if I annoyed you, dear. Please forgive me!

Sir C.—You haven't annoyed me, and when you look at me like that, I could forgive you anything.

Gladys.—Anything? (*Coaxingly.*)

Sir C.—(*Cautiously.*) Anything you're likely to have done.

(*Enter* MARTIN *with card.*)

Sir C.—What is it?

Martin.—A gentleman for Miss Aislabie, Sir Charles.

Sir C.—For you, Gladys! (*Looks at card.*) Mr. Treherne!

Gladys.—Ah, yes, Mr. Cyril Treherne. I surely mentioned him in my letters?

Sir C.—Never.

Gladys.—Well, he's an artist, who has been living in Brussels, and was employed by the sisters at the Convent

to restore some of the Chapel paintings. He used to give me hints about my drawing, and as the Custom House Officers were rude to me at the Italian frontier, I was very much obliged to him when he interfered and got my boxes through. (*Spoken with increasing confusion of manner.*)

Sir C.—H'm! (*to* MARTIN.) Show him up.

(*Exit* MARTIN.)

Sir C.—(*Aside.*) An artist, and a champion of damsels distressed by Custom House Officers! I don't like this.

(*Enter* MARTIN *ushering in* TREHERNE, L. C.)

Martin.—Mr. Treherne.

(TREHERNE *taken rather aback at seeing* SIR CHARLES.)

(MARTIN *exits.*)

Gladys.—Ah, Mr. Treherne, let me introduce you to my father.

Tre.—I must apologize for intruding, Sir Charles, but on reaching my hotel, I found I had Miss Aislabie's keys in my pocket, where I must have put them after seeing her boxes through the customs.

Sir C.—(*Aside.*) Old and transparent dodge! (*Aloud.*) I am pleased to have this opportunity of thanking you for your civility to my daughter. I hear you have been living at Brussels?

Tre.—For the past two years.

Sir C.—Odd that you should happen to leave the same day as Miss Aislabie. Curious these coincidences. On your way to Athens, she tells me?

Gladys.—No, father, to England. (TREHERNE *signs to her and she stops short, conscious of the mistake she has made.*)

Sir C.—Oh, I remember now you didn't tell me; I suppose I fancied it; so many artists go to Athens. But, my dear, hadn't you better go and rest before lunch? Your room is through here (*door* R.), first door on the right. Mr. Treherne will, I am sure, excuse you.

(SIR C. *goes up.*)

Gladys.—Very well, father. (*Crosses to* TREHERNE). Good-bye, Mr. Treherne.

Tre.—Good-bye, Miss Aislabie. (*Aside.*) For the present.

(*Exit* GLADYS, R.)

Sir C.—(*Who has been looking at* GLADYS' *portrait, suddenly, aside*) C. T.! By Jove! Cyril Treherne! (*Aloud.*) Those keys, Mr. Treherne, procured you an unexpected pleasure to-day.

Tre.—Indeed? What was that?

Sir C.—The pleasure of seeing me. That pleasure, I assure you, is reciprocal, because it enables me to give you a piece of information which will save you both time and expense in the future.

Tre.—And that is—?

Sir C.—That the direct route from Brussels to England is not via Naples.

Tre.—I–I don't understand.

Sir C.—Don't you? Then I'll be more explicit. You followed my daughter from Brussels; that portrait is your work, and you fancy yourself in love with her.

Tre.—It is no fancy; I do love her.

Sir C.—Ah! And she?

Tre.—Loves me.

Sir C.—She's a child! Love—absurd! Marriage—impossible!

Tre.—You will break her heart.

Sir C.—You're a very conceited young man. But women's hearts are not so brittle as you seem to think. Perhaps you don't know that I am a ruined man, and can give my daughter nothing?

Tre.—Glad—I mean Miss Aislabie does not care for money.

Sir C.—How can she possibly know? She never had any to care for. Look here, Mr. Treherne, my extravagance has robbed my daughter of the inheritance that should have been hers; it is my object to make her such amends as are in my power; all I can do is, whenever she marries, to ensure that she chooses some one who can give her the place in society to which she is entitled by birth and position.

Tre.—And who will treat her father as *his* father? I see; so she is to be sacrificed to your selfish interests.

Sir C.—I deny the sacrifice, but admit what you are pleased to call the selfishness. (*Relenting.*) Come, Mr. Treherne, I can make allowances for your disappointment, but there must be no more of this nonsense. Hang it, man, cheer up! Look at me, I've been in love, several times, but I got over it; so will you.

Tre.—You think so? And Gladys?

Sir C.—Is a dutiful daughter, sir, and will yield to my wishes.

Tre.—(*Losing his self command.*) Had she yielded to *my* wishes, it would have been out of your power to separate us. I warned her it was our only chance.

Sir C.—Your words can have but one meaning—That you tried to persuade her to a secret marriage.

Tre.—(*Who has recovered his coolness.*) All's fair in love and war, Sir Charles.

Sir C.—(*Drily.*) So I have heard; and therefore you cannot complain when I desire that you and my daughter may henceforth be strangers.

Tre.—(*With agitation.*) Sir Charles!—

Sir C.—Don't let me detain you, Mr. Treherne.

(TREHERNE *pauses irresolutely, then Exits* L. C. *abruptly.*)

Sir C.—Confound the fellow! This must be stopped at once! (*Going to door,* R. U. E.) (MRS. ROLLITT *knocks at door,* L. C.) Come in! (*She enters.*) (*Turns and sees* MRS. ROLLITT.) Mrs. Matcham Rollitt—!

Mrs. R.—How do you do, Sir Charles? The Portier has gone to his dinner, but I met a very nice young man on the stairs who told me where your apartment was, and that you were in. You don't seem pleased to see me!

Sir C.—May I know what has procured me the honor of this visit?

Mrs. R.—Certainly—won't you sit down? (*Seating herself.*) Five years ago I was staying with you at that Hotel at the Havanna, I have forgotten the name.—

Sir C.—So have I. It is connected with an episode I have no wish to remember.

Mrs. R.—Now, that's ungrateful, considering that for your sake I gave up a very first rate position, and a very second rate husband.

Sir C.—(*Agitated.*) Mrs. Rollitt, it was by your own act that our—

Mrs. R.—(*Finding that he hesitates for a word.*) Liaison?

Sir C.—(*Bowing.*) Came to an end. If this be an attempt to renew it—

Mrs. R.—Good Gracious! The conceit of these men! No, Sir Charles, the claim I am about to make on you is very different.

Sir C.—Claim! (*Cynically.*) Before you go further, I may as well tell you that I am a ruined man.

Mrs. R.—There you go again! Do I look as if I wanted money?

Sir C.—Most people do.

Mrs. R.—Well, I don't. When we parted I went back to Trinidad, only to find myself a widow.

Sir C.—(*Startled.*)—By George! And how were you received at the island?

Mrs. R.—With open arms. My husband had left me everything. He had never altered the will he made the day of our marriage; and to save appearances had given out that I was on a visit to friends in England.

Sir C.—Then what is your claim on me?

Mrs. R.—This. To begin with, I'm thinking of marrying again.

Sir C.—(*Stiffly.*) Excuse me, my marrying days are over.

Mrs. R.—Really, Sir Charles, you are impossible. Are you the only man in the world?

Sir C.—Oh, then there's another; whom—?

Mrs. R.—Exactly.

Sir C.—(*Aside.*) Poor devil!

Mrs. R.—I met him three weeks ago. I have told him my history, except that one episode which will not bear telling, and I come to you, who now alone know my secret, to beg you to be silent on my past life.

Sir C.—Your appeal was unnecessary.

Mrs. R.—Then I have your word of honor?

Sir C.—Of course; but where did you meet him?

Mrs. R.—In Malta.

Sir C.—Malta? And his name?

Mrs. R.—Arnold Errington.

Sir C.—Arnold Errington!

Mrs. R.—You know him? Remember I have your word.

Sir C.—(*Troubled.*) Yes! Yes! (*Aside.*) First Treherne, and now this woman! (*Aloud.*) What will you gain by such a marriage?

Mrs. R.—A quiet home,—I'm tired of wandering. The love of an honest man—

Sir C.—And the solid respectability of a British matron. By George, how sick you'll be of the whole thing in a week.

Mrs. R.—No, that's where you misunderstand me. Because I hated my husband, and—

Sir C.—Wearied of me.

Mrs. R.—Exactly? You think that I am incapable of love. You are wrong. My heart, dead heretofore to such influence this man has awakened into life—I love him—

Sir C.—(*Sceptically*). H'm!

Mrs. R.—Yes, I love him and he *shall* love me. (*Bursting into a laugh.*) I've astonished you? I don't wonder at it; I've astonished myself. You know Mr. Errington's in Naples?

Sir C.—(*Aside.*) *She* knows that—

Mrs. R.—He arrived this morning.

Sir C.—(*Aside.*) How can I get her away? (*Struck by an idea.*) Ah! (*Aloud.*) Yes, and goes to England this afternoon.

Mrs. R.—(*Eagerly.*) In his yacht?

Sir C.—No; by train.

Mrs. R.—Ah! Now I really must go.

Sir C.—(*Insinuatingly.*) By train? (*She laughs and shakes her finger at him.*) Allow me to see you to your hotel?

Mrs. R.—Thanks, it's close by.

(*Exeunt* L. C.)

Gladys.—(*Looking in cautiously, then* ENTERING.) I thought the voices had stopped. I wonder where they've gone? (*goes on to balcony.*) Why there goes father, and a lady with him, round the corner. Then where's Cyril? (*Bell heard, she comes back into the room.*)

Martin.—(*Without.*) Sir Charles has gone out, sir.

Tre.—(*Without.*) I know. (*Entering* L. C.) It's all right.

Gladys.—Cyril! Did you tell him? And oh! (*Looking at* TREHERNE'S *downcast face*) Was he angry?

Tre.—I told him, and he *was* angry.

Gladys.—Ah, at first; but when he understood that my happiness was so deeply concerned, he yielded?

Tre.—(*Troubled.*) No, he refused me; forbade me ever to see you again.

Gladys.—Courage, Cyril! My father loves me dearly; give me time to appeal to his affection for me!

Tre.—He will never consent—Ah, Gladys you should have married me at Brussels!

Gladys.—Secretly? And without my father's sanction?

Tre.—It is what we shall have to come to, if we are ever to be anything to one another.

Gladys.—Hush! I won't have you speak like that! If you love me as you say you do, you must trust me, our love must be tarnished by no such unworthy thoughts!

Tre.—Are they unworthy? If so, they are the outcome of that poverty which is my inheritance, but which in your father's eyes, renders me also unworthy, But, Glady's, you do love me? From the very first our hearts met and whispered the love which since then has found an echo in every look, in every word, in every touch! Is all this to go for nothing?

Gladys.—Surely not! The future is full of hope. And with your talent, you are bound to succeed.

Tre.—Your belief in me, makes me believe in myself; I shall strive for that success as I have never striven before, and with the incentive of your love I feel I shall obtain it.

And now I must go, but remember you are pledged to me, and I swear that I will never give you up. Promise to be true and faithful to me, as I now promise to be true and faithful to you!

Gladys.—I promise!

Tre.—You will write to me?

Gladys.—No; it will be better not, until I have won my father to our side.

Tre.—But if you should be in any trouble?

Gladys.—Ah, *then*, I *will* write!

Tre.—And I will come to you, no matter at what cost! See, here is my address in London (*giving paper.*) And now, good-bye, my darling! (*embrace.*) (TREHERNE *turns to go, and meets* SIR CHARLES, *who enters* L. C.)

Sir C.—(*Regards them silently for a few moments.*) Gladys, leave us!

Gladys.—(*aside to* TREHERNE) Agree to everything he says for my sake!

(*Exit* GLADYS, R.)

Sir C.—Mr. Treherne, a few minutes ago, I expressed a wish that our acquaintance should cease. Since when, may I ask, has it been the privilege of a gentleman to intrude his society where it is not desired?

Tre.—Sir Charles, I alone am to blame in the matter; your daughter—

Sir C.—(*Interrupting*) Requires no defence at your hands, Mr. Treherne. With regard to yourself—

Tre.—State what you require of me, and I am ready to do it.

Sir C.—(*Aside*) Whew! Here's a change of wind! (*Aloud*) I will take you at your word. You tell me you are bound to England, prove your sincerity by going to-day.

Tre.—I will. Good-bye, Sir Charles.

(*Enter* ERRINGTON, L. C.)

Erring.—Here I am again, and remarkably hungry—why, Cyril! Where did you drop from? I thought you were at Brussels?

Tre.—So I was; *chance* brought me here; how are you, my dear old fellow?

Erring.—Oh, I'm all right. Sir Charles, you didn't know Treherne was one of my oldest and best friends?

Sir C.—No, by George, I didn't.

Erring.—And how goes on the painting?

Tre.—It goes on, and that's all I can say for it. It's precious uphill work, Arnold, until you can get a start.

Sir C.—Why don't you give Mr. Treherne a start, Errington? (*Aside.*) Start him to the other end of the world and keep him there!

Erring.—Why, so I will. Let me see—landscapes used to be your strong point, Cyril?

Tre.—Yes; though some of my artist friends consider that I have the makings of a portrait painter in me (*with a side glance at* SIR CHARLES).

Erring.—Well, look here, then, I was up in the Hebrides last year and saw some lovely spots. Why not go there for two or three months and make sketches for me?

Sir C.—(*Aside.*) Good! A nice out-of-the-way place!

Erring.—I'll select what I like, and you shall paint the pictures from them for me.

Tre.—Do you really mean it?

Erring.—Of course I do. (*Aside.*) And name your own price. (*Aloud.*) You shall send them to the Academy, and if they're too good for them, they shall have a gallery all to themselves in Bond Street.

Tre.—(*Taking his hand*) My dear Arnold, this is very good and generous of you, I can never thank you enough!

(*Enter* PARLBURY, *followed by* MRS. ROLLITT, L. C.)

Parl.—Arnold, here's Mrs. Rollitt, whom I met in the street, and who said she was most anxious to see you.

Mrs. R.—Ah, Mr. Errington, how do you do? (*shaking hands with him*). Sir Charles, I hope you will forgive this second intrusion?

Sir C.—Not at all, delighted. (SHE *talks aside to* ERRINGTON.)

Sir C.—(*Who has gone up to* PARLBURY, *aside*) Why did you bring her here?

Parl.—(*Aside*) Couldn't get rid of her. But I say, what did I tell you about her curves?

Sir C.—Damn her curves!

Parl.—Oh, I protest! Damn her angles if you like, but don't damn her curves.

Erring.—How is it we have the pleasure of seeing you in Naples, Mrs. Rollitt?

Mrs. R.—Why, just after you sailed from Malta, I received a telegram from my solicitor recalling me to London on urgent business. So I got on board the Florio boat, and here I am; and as I hear that you are going to England this afternoon, I venture as an unprotected female to claim your escort.

Erring.—I should have been charmed, but I have no intention of returning to England at present.

(SIR CHARLES *delighted.*)

Mrs. R.—(*Taken aback*) Not going? But Sir Charles told me——

Sir C.—And Sir Charles is delighted to find that he was wrong.

Mrs. R.—(*Aside*) What has made him alter his plans, I wonder?

(*Enter* GLADYS, R. *She stops short at seeing so many people.* TREHERNE *makes an involuntary step forward;* SIR CHARLES *fixes him with a glance and he collapses.*)

Sir C.—Come along, Gladys, I want to introduce an old friend of mine to you, Mr. Arnold Errington.

(ARNOLD *crosses, shakes hands with* GLADYS, *and talks aside with her.* MRS. ROLLITT, *whose gaze has shifted from* ARNOLD *to* GLADYS *with a puzzled expression, comes forward to* SIR CHARLES.)

Mrs. R.—Ah, your daughter, Sir Charles? Pray present me.

Sir C.—(*Stiffly*) Gladys, Mrs. Matcham Rollitt.

Mrs. R.—(*Advancing towards* GLADYS *across* SIR CHARLES) My dear child——!

Sir C.—(*Interposing and taking her hand*) So sorry you must be going; at all events you shall not go alone. Mr. Treherne here will escort you to England; you'll find him very useful—at the frontiers.

(TREHERNE *bows.*)

(TREHERNE *and* MRS. ROLLITT *advance towards door* C., *followed by* SIR CHARLES. ERRINGTON *looking at* GLADYS, GLADYS *at* TREHERNE. PARLBURY *surprised.*)

CURTAIN.

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

AUGUST.—*Four months are supposed to have elapsed.*

SCENE.—*Drawing-room at Denethorpe Abbey. Bay window at back opening on to garden and grounds. Entrances* R. *and* L.

(SIR CHARLES AISLABIE *reading newspaper*, GLADYS *sitting, ostensibly reading, but in a reverie.*)

Sir C.—The 'Deneham Gazette' has let itself go in its description of your home-coming, Gladys. Listen (*reads*). "On Saturday last, the bells of Denethorpe Parish Church rang out a merry welcome to the Squire of Denethorpe Abbey and his young and lovely bride, on their return from their "lune de miel "—nothing so vulgar as honeymoon, you see. Then follow two columns of triumphal arches, village children, flowers, fireworks, speeches, and beer, winding up with a list of people present, commencing with Sir Charles Aislabie, father of the bride, and ending with Mr. Gittens who, I am given to understand, is the local sweep, washed for the occasion. Here, (*holding out paper*) you must read it, it will amuse you. Why, (*seeing she does not move*) what's the matter?

Gladys.—(*Starting*) Eh! What? (*taking paper*) Oh, thank you.

Sir C.—Why, my child, what on earth are you sighing for?

Gladys.—Was I sighing?

Sir C.—(*Affectionately*) Deeply, though no woman ever had less reason.

Gladys.—(*Interrupting*) Yes, yes, father, I know. Before I married Mr. Errington, you daily impressed on me the advantages of such an alliance.

Sir C.—(*Hurt*) Did I overrate them? You have married a rich man, and a thorough gentleman.

Gladys.—But under what circumstances?

Sir C.—(*Cheerily*) Under exceedingly favorable circumstances. He is devoted to you, and his one idea seems to be to forestall your every wish.

Gladys.—And what does he get from *me* in return? Had Arnold been a man of less singleness of heart and purpose, he would have found out that I did not love him.

Sir C.—(*Aside.*) That d——d Treherne.

Gladys.—And I should never have been his wife. But he is so free from all duplicity himself, that he cannot imagine it in others, and it was not in his nature to suppose that a woman would be base enough to marry him for wealth and position only—

Sir C.—Gladys, your words pain me terribly. I knew you did not love Arnold, but I felt it to be impossible that you should not like and esteem him, and it seemed to me that the love of such a man could not fail in time to win yours.

Gladys.—Ah, father, you judged me from your own high stand point, forgetting that I was only a weak, foolish girl.

Sir C.—It was my anxiety for your future, Gladys, that induced me to urge your marriage. I may have been wrong, but I did it for the best.

Gladys.—Do I not know it. What have you ever done, that in your love and unselfishness, you did not put me first.—Oh, I am cruel and base to forget it even for a moment. Father, dear father! forgive me—

Sir C.—(*Who has tried to stop her, in desperation*) My child, do not speak to me like that, indeed you do not know.

Erring.—(*Without*) Very well, you'll find me in my study in ten minutes. (*Enters.*)

Gladys.—Who is that, Arnold?

Erring.—Mr. Morgan, the agent, dear. By the way, I've just learnt from him who the new tenant of "The Firs" is.

Sir C.—The Firs?

Erring.—Yes, that quaint old house just outside the Park gates.

Gladys.—And who has taken it?

Erring.—A friend of Sir Charles's. Mrs. Matcham Rollitt.

(*Enter* SERVANT *with letters.*)

Sir C.—(*Aside*) Confound her! What does she want here?

Erring.—(*Taking letter*) Second post—eh?

(SERVANT *takes letters to* SIR CHARLES *and* GLADYS.)

Erring.—But the best of the joke is—(*stops, looks round*)—Where's old Parlbury?

Gladys.—Somewhere in the grounds, I think.

Erring.—The best of the joke is, that his wife and daughter are staying with Mrs. Rollitt. (*Opens letter.*)

Sir C.—Good business for Parlbury.

Erring.—By Jove, what do you think? Cyril Treherne writes to say he's coming here to-day.

(GLADYS *sinks back in chair,* SIR CHARLES *masks her.* ERRINGTON'S *attention at the same time taken up by* SERVANT, *who has been trying to catch his eye.*)

Erring.—(*To Servant*) What is it?

Servant.—A letter for Mr. Treherne, sir.

Erring.—(*Without looking at it*) Put it on the mantelpiece.

(SERVANT *does so and Exits.*)

Sir C.—And where does our young friend write from?

Erring.—From York, apparently, but he has been sketching in the Hebrides—this is what he says. (*Reads.*) "I got sick of the place"—that's the Hebrides—"and longed for society other than my own, and for news—fancy, I've hardly seen a paper for three months or more—You told me to propose myself when I could—"

Sir C.—When did you do that?

Erring.—I'm sure I can't say—Oh, of course when we met in Naples, but to tell you the truth, I'd forgotten all about

it. Let's see, where was I? Oh. (*Reads.*) "Propose myself when I could, so I take you at your word, feeling sure that my sudden descent on the abbey, will in no way over tax the resources of your"—(*Stops short, puzzled, then begins to grin.*)

Sir C.—Well, of your what?

Erring.—By Jove, that's funny, ha! ha! (*Laughing.*) "The resources of your *bachelor* establishment."

Sir C.—He doesn't know you're married. (GLADYS *greatly agitated.*)

Erring.—Apparently not. (*Laughing.*) I say, what a joke! (*Laughing.*) "Bachelor establishment!" We'll have some rare fun with him! (*Laughing.*) Won't we, Sir Charles? (*Laughs.*)

Sir C.—(*Forcing a laugh.*) Rather—! (*Ring heard.*) Hark, that can't be he already?

Erring.—Hardly, I should say. (*Goes to window,* C.)

Sir C.—(*Aside to* GLADYS.) For heaven's sake don't betray yourself!

Erring.—(*Drawing back from window.*) It's Mrs. Rollitt and her two guests. (*Looking out.*) They're coming this way; I'll go and meet them.

(*Exits by window.*)

Gladys.—Father! What is to be done? I knew we must meet some day, but I never dreamt it would be so soon. Oh, if we had but told Arnold!

Sir C.—(*In despair.*) Gladys, what folly is this! This man can be nothing to you now. (*She droops her head.*) Good Heavens! You don't mean to say you love him still?

Gladys—I don't know, it's all so sudden. I have dreaded this all along; I feel it is weak, cowardly of me, but I dare not trust myself to meet him! I cannot yet forget the past!

Sir C.—(*Firmly.*) You have nothing to do with the past; you are Arnold Errington's *wife*, and no Cyril Treherne must make you forget that.

Mrs. R.—(*Without.*) You're sure we shan't be in the way?

Sir C.—(*Hurriedly.*) Here they come, be careful!

(*Enter* ERRINGTON, MRS. ROLLITT *and* MRS. PARLBURY.

Erring.—Gladys, my dear. (*Motions her towards the two ladies.*)

Mrs. R.—My dear Mrs. Errington, so good of you to receive us at such an early hour. Ah, Sir Charles, how are you? (*To Gladys.*) I've taken the liberty of bringing Mrs. and Miss Parlbury to make your acquaintance. Why, what has become of Ethel? She was with us a moment ago.

Mrs. P.—Don't ask me. I am never sure of her movements for two minutes together. (*Talks aside with* GLADYS *and* ERRINGTON.)

Mrs. R.—Making a long stay, Sir Charles?

Sir C.—Till the winter, when I return to Naples.

Mrs. R.—Oh, so you've kept your old apartments?

Sir C.—Yes; I'm too old a stager to think they will always want me with them.

Mrs. R.—Ah, dear old Naples, it's full of memories—for me, some sweet, some bitter.

Sir C.—Never mind that, Mrs. Rollitt, better let by-gones be by-gones.

Mrs. R.—By all means, though you didn't treat me quite fairly.

Sir C.—What could I do, when Errington proposed for Gladys, I couldn't well suggest that he should marry you—

Mrs. R.—Of course not. After all I doubt very much whether our friend would have suited me.

Sir C.—Then you don't bear malice?

Mrs. R.—It's such a privilege to forgive. (*Goes up.*)

Sir C.—(*Suspiciously.*) H'm—!

Gladys.—(*To* MRS. ROLLITT.) I hear you have become our neighbor?

Mrs. R.—Yes; and I'm so glad you've arrived, for being an absolute stranger here, they've all turned up there noses at me.

Erring.—Charitable creatures!

Mrs. P.—You may say that, but if they hadn't had more nose than charity they couldn't have done it.

Mrs. R.—But now with the moral support of the Abbey, the Firs will flourish. Ah, what a business it is getting into a house! I expect it will be quite a month before I'm completely settled.

Mrs. P.—(*Prophetically.*) Less than that!

Sir C.—Good gracious, ma'am, what do you mean?

Mrs. P.—"Drains."

Gladys.—Dear me, is the sanitation—?

Mrs. P.—There is none.

Mrs. R.—What nonsense! The sanitation is all right.

Mrs. P.—Oh, it's all right, if you're partial to the society of typhoid microbes.

Sir C.—(*Gallantly*) They don't seem to have harmed you.

Mrs. R.—(*Maliciously*) No. You would never suspect Mrs. Parlbury of being an invalid, would you?

Sir C.—I really should not. I trust there's not much the matter?

Mrs. P.—Just what those fools of doctors can't find out, so I'm trying a course of patent medicines.

Erring.—In your state of health, Mrs. Parlbury, I wonder you're not afraid to stay at the Firs.

Mrs. P.—I disinfect myself three times a day, and sleep in a carbolic respirator.

Gladys.—Not a very pleasant remedy.

Mrs. P.—It isn't a remedy, it's a precaution; the only remedy would be to pull the place down.

Mrs. R.—Pull the Firs down! What sacrilege!

Mrs. P.—Just what Mr. Parlbury would have said. But that reminds me—He's staying here—?

Erring.—Ye-es. He was anxious to make some antiquarian researches in the old Abbey. You see, we didn't know you were going to be so near (*apologetically*).

Mrs. P.—What's that got to do with it? I particularly want to see Mr. Parlbury; and I *think* he might have had the civility to call.

Gladys.—I don't think he knew you were in the neighborhood.

Mrs. P.—It would have been all the same, his head is so full of antiquities, he has no time to think of me. (*All laugh aside.*)

Erring.—Shall I send for him?

Mrs. R.—No, let us go and find him.

Mrs. P.—What? I run after Mr. Parlbury? I hope I've more self-respect! (*Sitting down,* L.)

Mrs. R.—Then I'll go alone; you won't be jealous? (*going* C.)

Mrs. P.—Jealous! (*scornfully*) On second thoughts I'll come with you.

(*Exeunt* C.)

Erring.—Well, Morgan will be waiting for me, Sir Charles; will you come? I want your opinion on an Alderney heifer I bought yesterday.

(SIR CHARLES *exits,* R, ERRINGTON *following.*)

Gladys.—Arnold! (*Following him,* R.)

Erring.—Well, my darling?

Gladys.—Will Mr. Treherne stay long?

Erring.—'Pon my word, I don't know. Why?

Gladys.—I—I wish he wasn't coming.

Erring.—Why, I thought you liked him?

Gladys.—(*Evasively*) We don't want any strangers here yet.

Erring.—(*Very much pleased, aside*) By Jove! (*Aloud*) No, we don't, my darling, but I can't well put him off now.

Gladys.—Can't you tell him we have to leave home?

Erring.—But we haven't.

Gladys.—But we can.

Erring.—I can't, dearest. I've been away too long from the place as it is. Come, poor Treherne is very harmless; put up a little while with him for my sake.

(*Exit* ERRINGTON R.)

Gladys.—For your sake! It is for your sake that I would never see him again, and yet you would not understand! What if I spoke out plainly, trusting to his generosity! There's hope in that. (*Goes to door* R,) Arnold—!

But no, I cannot—you have placed your happiness and honor in my keeping, you have taken me to your heart, and enshrined me there; how can I destroy at one blow the edifice of faith, hope, and love I have helped you to build! By confessing that I married you without love, and with a lie upon my lips! Ah, no, it is impossible! (*Sinks into a chair in a state of dejection.*)

(*Enter* MRS. PARLBURY, C.)

Mrs. P.—Oh, dear! (*Exhausted.*) We couldn't find him anywhere. (GLADYS *looks up.*) But what's the matter? Ain't you well?

Gladys.—(*Rousing herself.*) Oh, yes, I'm all right; but will you excuse me a few minutes, we are expecting a visitor, and I have to give the necessary orders.

Mrs. P.—Certainly, don't mind me, I can always amuse myself with the "Family Doctor."

Gladys.—The Family Doctor?

Mrs. P.—Yes, this book. I always carry it with me. By the way, that reminds me. There is a Dr. Langton residing near here—?

Gladys.—Oh, yes, he has a very good practice at Deneham, about twenty miles off. My husband thinks him very clever.

Mrs. P.—(*Aside.*) Then I think he'll do. (*Aloud.*) Oh, by the way, he's not married?

Gladys.—Not that I know of, but you really must excuse me; I'll not be long.

(*Exit* R.)

Mrs. P.—He was certainly struck with Ethel at Scarboro' last month, and apart from the satisfaction of seeing her settled in life, it will be a comfort to me in my delicate state of health to have a medical man for a son-in-law. (*Reads.*)

(*Enter* PARLBURY, C.)

Parl.—(*Coming down, not seeing* MRS. PARLBURY.) Yes, I think that I have established without question, that the

monks' refectory was situated in the South-east angle of—(*Sees* MRS. PARLBURY.) Mrs. Parlbury! This is an unexpected pleasure!

Mrs. P.—Ah, Mr. Parlbury, untruthful as ever.

Parl.—Oh, very well, since you object to my casting the glamor of poetry over our relations, I will merely remark that this intrusion is indelicate.

Mrs. P.—Nonsense, it was necessary, on account of your daughter.

Parl.—*My* daughter! *Your* daughter till the end of October.

Mrs. P.—September. Your six months begins on the 1st of October.

Parl.—Oh, are you sure?

Mrs. P.—Quite.

Parl.—Oh! It's rather unfortunate, because my friend Judson, of the mediaeval antiquity department in the British Museum, is going on a tour through Sicily in October and November, and I've half promised to go with him.

Mrs. P.—Why unfortunate? And why didn't you quite promise? It would be a nice change for your daughter—

Parl.—Ahem! I couldn't take *our* daughter.

Mrs. P.—Then what did you propose to do with her?

Parl.—That was my difficulty. Now, I was thinking, if you would take her for October and November, I'd pay you back in June and July, next year.

Mrs. P.—No!

Parl.—But, my dear—!

Mrs. P.—Your dear! Pooh!! No!!!

Pal.—Not to oblige an old acquaintance?

Mrs. P.—Mr. Judson is not an old acquaintance of mine.

Parl.—No, but I am. Now, won't you? (*Puts his arm round her.*

Mrs. P.—Certainly not. Take your arm away, sir, how dare you? During October and November I am going to stay with Janet Maynard, at Brighton.

Parl.—Well, then—?

Mrs. P.—And she has only *one* spare room.

Parl.—Well, I do think that you might give up your visit under the circumstances.

Mrs. P.—I might, but I shan't.

Parl.—Oh, all right. I thought I knew all your faults, but till now I did not realize that you were selfish.

Mrs. P.—Selfish! And what are you, pray, who would have me stop in London when it's damp and foggy, though you know how delicate I am?

Parl.—Delicate! That's a good one! Why, you're—

Mrs. P.—Never mind what I am. *You* are a brute!

Ethel.—(*Without*) Oh, Dr. Langton, I'm sure I'm too heavy for you! (*Enter* LANGTON C., *carrying* ETHEL.) Oh, for goodness sake, put me down!

(HE *puts her down;* SHE *has only one shoe on.*)

Mrs. P.—Ethel! What is the meaning of this?

Parl.—Yes, Ethel, what is the meaning of this?

Ethel.—Why, father, you here? (*Kisses him.*) And how are you?

Parl.—I'm very well, thank you, but I shall be better when you have answered my question. What is all this?

Ethel.—Oh, all this is Dr. Langton.

Lang.—Allow me to explain. Miss Parlbury had wandered beyond the grounds into a field—

Ethel.—With a cow in it, a horrid cow—

Lang.—Which ran at Miss Parlbury—

Ethel.—And Miss Parlbury ran away. Miss Parlbury also fell down and lost her shoe, and Dr. Langton not being able to find it—

Mrs. P.—(*Suspiciously.*) He couldn't find it?

Lang.—(*Confused.*) No, I—that is, I think the cow must have eaten it, and so, Miss Parlbury being unable to walk without it—I— (*action of carrying*).

Parl.—She might have *hopped.*

Ethel.—Perhaps you'd have liked me to crawl? (*Talks aside with* LANGTON.)

Parl.—(*Offended*) There's impertinence! The effect of six months of *your* society!

Mrs. P.—And yet you want me to keep her two months longer? Not if I know it!

Parl.—Ah, well! (*Sighing.*) I suppose I must give up Sicily!

Mrs. P.—Unless we can find some one to take charge of her.

Parl.—Ah, that's not so easy.

Mrs. P.—Oh, I don't know. (*Nudges him.*) Look there.

Parl.—(*Looks at* ETHEL *and* LANGTON.) Whew! Is that it?

Mrs. P.—I think so.

Parl.—Money?

Mrs. P.—Comfortable.

Parl.—Then *this* is no place for us.

Mrs. P.—Suppose you show me the gardens?

Parl.—With pleasure. (*Offering arm.*) But, I say, don't you go and loose your shoe, I shan't carry *you.*

(*Exeunt.*)

Ethel.—There, see what a row you've got me into by your free and easy way of treating me—as if I were a child.

Lang.—Free and easy? Oh, Miss Parlbury, you know I respect you from the bottom of my heart!

Ethel.—Is this the bottom of your heart coming to the top, or is it what it feels like—the heel of my shoe, that the cow ate? (*His coat bulges over his chest, she touches it.*) Come, hand it over.

Lang.—Oh, no, Miss Ethel, please let me keep it!

Ethel.—What for? It won't fit you.

Lang.—(*Producing the shoe.*) This little shoe? I should think not!

Ethel.—Well, give it me, unless you want me to run a nail or pin in my foot, and be laid up.

Lang.—Ah! (*As if delighted with the idea.*)

Ethel.—The idea seems to please you?

Lang.—Oh, no, no; but I couldn't help thinking what joy it would be to attend you.

Ethel.—Oh! You are selfish! (*Snatching her shoe.*) No, not a word! (*Puts it on.*) Good morning Dr. Langton. No, I will listen to nothing!

(*Exit* C., *followed by* LANGTON *protesting.*)

(*Enter* SERVANT, L., *ushering in* TREHERNE.)

Servant.—I will find Mr. Errington and let him know of your arrival, sir.

Tre.—All right. (*Exit* SERVANT, L.) (*Looking round.*) This doesn't look much like bachelor's diggings. (*Looks at pictures on walls,* L.)

(*Enter* GLADYS, R.)

Gladys.—(*Aside.*) How shall I tell him? I thought I had summoned up sufficient courage, but now that the moment has come, my heart fails me.

(TREHERNE *becomes conscious of her presence and turns.*)

Tre.—What! Gladys! Sir Charles is here?

Gladys.—(*Faintly.*) Yes, oh, yes, he is here.

Tre.—Did you know I was coming?

Gladys.—Yes, Mr. Errington told us this morning.

Tre.—What an age it seems since I saw you, but during all these weary months, your sweet face has been ever present to me, and you, Gladys, you have thought of me sometimes, have you not?

Gladys.—(*In desperation*) Mr. Treherne!

Tre.—(*Surprised*) *Mr.* Treherne!

Gladys.—You must not call me Gladys.

Tre.—Not call you Gladys, why not?

Gladys.—Because—because—(*Her tongue fails her, and she pushes the newspaper which is lying on the table between them towards him*).

Tre.—(*Taking newspaper*) What's this? (*Reads.*) "Welcome to the Squire of Denethorpe Abbey and his young and lovely bride? Arnold married? To whom? (*She does not reply, his gaze falls from her face to her left hand, which he seizes, and seeing the wedding ring, casts it from him.*)

To you! Good heavens! Am I dreaming! You, Gladys Aislabie, whose vows of love and constancy are still ringing in my ears, have become the wife of Arnold Errington?

Gladys.—(*Roused.*) And why? Because when I saw no way of escaping this marriage to which my father was urging me, I looked to you for aid, and you turned a deaf ear to my appeal.

Tre.—(*Staggered.*) To your appeal?

Gladys.—What right then have you to upbraid me, if weary of the struggle, and piqued by your indifference, I yielded.

Tre.—But when, where, how did you appeal to me?

Gladys.—Do you forget the compact we made, that in any trouble I was to write to you, and you would come to me at any cost?

Tre.—And you wrote?

Gladys.—You know I did.

Tre.—I do not know, and as I live, I never received your letter.

Gladys.—You never received it!

Tre.—No; that might, I think, have occurred to you, and you need hardly have been so quick to be on with the new love, before you had made quite certain the old was unworthy.

Gladys.—A week after I sent the letter, Mr. Errington received one from you, from the very address to which I had written, why, therefore, should I imagine that mine had miscarried?

Tre.—Since it did not reach me, how was it that it was not returned to you by the post office?

Gladys.—I can't think.

Tre.—I can. That letter may have been written, but it was never posted.

Gladys.—What do you mean to insinuate?

Tre.—Oh, it is not difficult to divine the considerations by which you were swayed. The letter was written, was about to be despatched, when the thought of the advantages to be derived from becoming the wife of the wealthy

Arnold Errington sent the memory of poverty-stricken Cyril Treherne to the winds, and the letter to the waste paper basket.

Gladys.—Enough, Mr. Treherne, from the moment you insult me, I must cease to regret that my letter did not reach you.

Tre.—(*Aside*) Then it was intercepted by Sir Charles.

Gladys.—(*Going*) You will probably make your stay here as short as possible.

Tre.—Not so fast, Mrs. Errington, you take a tone with me that requires explanation.

Gladys.—(*Coldly.*) I thought my words were explicit enough.

Tre.—To a certain extent. You promised to be true and faithful to me. That you should have broken your word is comprehensible, that you should have fooled and cheated me, is a woman's privilege, but why should you seek to get rid of me?

Gladys.—Your accusations are most unfair. I am not responsible for the chance that separated us, nor can I undo what has been done. Let us accept our destiny without bitterness and useless recrimination. For my sake be generous and go.

Tre.—Is the generosity to be all on my side. (*She looks at him reproachfully and moves to door*, R.) No, no, don't leave me. Ah, Gladys, if you knew how I love you, if you knew what a cruel blow this is to me, you would be patient with me—you did love me once.

Gladys.—Don't remind me of that. My husband loves and trusts me. I will not dishonor him by even listening to such words.

Tre.—Then with that safe-guard over your heart, what harm can I do? Why send me away?

Gladys.—For your own sake, the sight of me can only be a source of pain to you.

Tre.—But if I am content to suffer?

Gladys.—You would not be content. No; you must go—

Tre.—You fear me then?

Gladys.—No; a thousand times no.

Tre.—Then you fear yourself? And you still love me—?

Gladys.—(*Breaking down.*) Unmanly, ungenerous! Is my burden not heavy enough to bear, that you must seek to add to it. (*Going* R.) You of all people in the world, oh! it is cruel!! Cruel!!!

(*Enter* SIR CHARLES, R.)

(*Exit* GLADYS.)

Tre.—(*Starting forward to stop her.*) Gladys!

(*He is confronted by* SIR CHARLES. MRS. ROLLITT *appears*, C.)

Sir C.—We came into collision once before on this subject, Mr. Treherne, but my daughter was then unmarried.

Tre.—Yes, and now she has a husband, and I would recommend you not to interfere in what is essentially *his* business. Had you not intercepted Gladys' letter to me, Arnold Errington would have known how matters stood between us, and this marriage would never have taken place.

Sir C.—Letter! What letter? (TREHERNE *laughs incredulously.*) (*Aside.*) Could she have been fool enough to write to him! (*Aloud.*) You are mistaken, I did not intercept any letter, in fact I don't believe there was any letter to intercept.

Tre.—How can I believe you, when I know you would do everything in your power to keep us apart.

Sir C.—I admit it. Had I allowed my daughter to follow the dictates of her then extremely foolish heart, she would now have been the discontented wife of a struggling artist. Happily, she was guided by me. Do you imagine, my young friend, that I am going passively to allow your romantic but criminal affection to disturb her peace of mind, and to destroy the position I have made for her? Disabuse your mind of any such idea. To begin with, you can't stay here. I'll leave you to find an excuse for going.

(*Exit* R.)

(TREHERNE *unable to speak, stands looking after him.*)

Mrs. R.—(*Observing him coolly.*) Good advice, Mr. Treherne, if I were you, I should take it.

Tre.—(*Starting*) Mrs. Rollitt! You here—?

Mrs. R.—Yes, I am living in the neighborhood.

Tre.—You know she has jilted me heartlessly.

Mrs. R.—And you propose to correct her want of taste by running away with her? As a friend, I again advise you to give up the idea.

Tre.—I'm not inclined to take advice,

Mrs. R.—(*Aside*) So much the better. (*Aloud*) At all events listen to it. You love Gladys, Mr. Treherne, and she—loves you (*slowly*).

Tre.—Ah! You believe that, and yet you tell me to leave her? Have you no better argument?

Mrs. R.—Her father! Ah, I know what you would say, that but for him, you and Gladys would never have been parted, but remember he was acting as he thought best for her welfare.

Tre.—For her welfare? No! For his own. Go on, what next?

Mrs. R.—Arnold Errington, her husband, is your friend.

Tre.—The husband of Gladys Aislabie is no friend of mine.

Mrs. R.—At least you are his guest.

Tre.—(*Passionately*) For not one instant longer than I can help!

Mrs. R.—Ah, then you will go—? And when once more at your work, you will forget her, and forgive him—?

Tre.—Never! He has come between me and the woman I love!

Mrs. R.—And if he did, remember he, too, loved her. You know his noble nature; think of the struggle he must have had before he yielded to temptation; think what remorse such a man must feel at the memory of his treachery!

Tre.—Treachery! Treachery! Do you mean to tell me that Arnold Errington *knew* that he was supplanting me with Gladys?

Mrs. R.—(*Aside.*) He soon shall, if he didn't.

Tre.—Speak woman! Is that what you would insinuate?

Mrs. R.—A little more courtesy, if you please, Mr. Treherne. *Really*, in your sketching tour in the wilds of Scotland you seem to have absorbed some of the ruggedness of your surroundings. I insinuate nothing. I am simply speaking of things as they happened.

Tre.—(*Half to himself.*) The pictures! Then it was to get me out of the way that he gave me that commission! Treachery! Two can play at that game!

Mrs. R.—Remember Arnold Errington's wife must be sacred for you.

Tre.—Because he is my friend? Was it because he was my friend that he came like a thief in the night and stole my love from me? No! Such friendship as he has given me, I will give to him. Life to me is valueless without Gladys! (*Seizing her arm.*) Listen, I have spoken to you openly; too openly, perhaps. Breathe but one word of what has passed between us; betray me by a look, a gesture, and — —!

Mrs. R.—Mr. Treherne, you frighten me!

Tre.—Good! Then you will be silent?

(*Exit* C.)

Mrs. R.—What a bear! (*rubbing her arm.*) But no matter, since bear-like he dances to the tune I play. Errington shall be free again, and when he *is* free—well, who knows?

(*Enter* ERRINGTON.)

Erring.—Ah, Mrs. Rollitt, I hear Treherne has arrived. Have you seen him?

Mrs. R.—Yes, he was here not a moment ago. He went into the garden, I fancy to look for you.

Erring.—I'll follow him (*going, stops, then laughing*). Oh, you know he has not heard of my marriage?

Mrs. R.—Hasn't he? (*Taken aback.* ERRINGTON *notices it.*)

Erring.—Why, you haven't told him, have you?

Mrs. R.—No, oh, no!

Erring.—(*Relieved*) That's all right. You see, we want to have some fun with him on the subject.

Mrs. R.—Some *fun* with him? You are not in earnest—!

Erring.—Certainly. Why not?

Mrs. R.—Hasn't Sir Charles told you?

Erring.—Told me? What?

Mrs. R.—Oh, nothing. I thought you knew?

Erring.—Really, I must ask you to explain—!

Mrs. R.—I—I'd rather not.

Erring.—What is this? Mrs. Rollitt, I must beg of you—!

Mrs. R.—In confidence then? (HE *bows.*) Unless I have been misinformed, Mr. Treherne and your wife, before you married her—oh! before you married her—were attached to each other.

Erring.—My wife! Treherne—!

Mrs. R.—I am sure you feel with me that it is right you should know this, as otherwise you might unwittingly have inflicted pain on your old friend.

Erring.—Yes, you are right. (*Half aside.*) This then is why she didn't like his coming, poor child, and I thought it mere caprice!

Mrs. R.—You won't let Sir Charles know that I have told you? You see, he's not aware that I have guessed the secret.

Erring.—Oh, then, it's only a guess?

Mrs. R.—A woman's guess is not often wide of the mark in such a case, but, after all, Mr. Errington, why need this trouble you? Poor Treherne is more deserving of your pity than anything else.

Erring.—Pity—true, for he has lost Gladys!

Mrs. R.—(*Aside.*) The fool!

(*Enter* TREHERNE, C.)

Tre.—(*Rather boisterous to hide his real feelings.*) My dear Arnold, how are you? (SIR CHARLES *and* GLADYS *enter*, R.) So you have prepared a little surprise for me, eh? (ERRINGTON *starts.*) Oh, yes, Mrs. Errington and I met just now, and of course the truth came out. I congratulate you both—!

Erring.—(*With feeling.*) Thank you, old chap!

Tre.—And what's more, I can tell you I don't mean to be left long in the lurch. (*Down* L.)

Mrs. R.—That's right, Mr. Treherne! Depend upon it, there is nothing like matrimony! (L. C.)

Tre.—(*Laughing.*)—What do you say to that, Sir. Charles?

Sir C.—It's like nothing else. (R. C.)

Mrs. R.—Cynic!

Erring.—By the way, Cyril, there's a letter for you on the mantlepiece, I think. Gladys, dear, give it to him. (GLADYS *goes to mantlepiece and looks about.*)

Tre.—(*With pretended anxiety.*)—A lady's hand?

Mrs. R.—(*Aside to* ERRINGTON.) After all I don't think he needs your pity.

Gladys.—(*Finding letter.*) My letter—Heavens! What shall I do? (*At first impulse conceals it.* TREHERNE *watching her.*)

Erring.—(*To* MRS. R.) You see you were mistaken (*Advancing to* GLADYS.) Can't you find it, dear?

Gladys.—Yes, Oh yes! (*Gives it to* TREHERNE.) (*Aside.*) If you are a gentleman, destroy it!

Tre.—(*Aside.*) Then she *did* write to me! (*Looking at front of letter.*) What's this! (*Reads.*) "Found in the folds of a newspaper wrapper at *Melbourne.*" No wonder it never reached me until now—!

Erring.—(*Coming down to him.*) My dear old chap, I can't tell you how pleased I am to see you! You don't know half I feel for you!

Tre.—(*With simulated cordiality.*) Nor you my dear Arnold, half I feel for you! (*As he speaks he holds the letter unperceived by* ERRINGTON *before* SIR CHARLES' *face, who has come down to other side of him.*)

Sir C.—(*Aside.*) (*Staggered.*) Good Heavens! She did write to him!

CURTAIN.

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

SEPTEMBER.—*One week is supposed to have elapsed.*

SCENE:—*Treherne's studio in Mrs. Rollitt's house "The Firs." Large window opening to the ground* R. C., *A window for artistic purposes above this. A large old-fashioned oak press* R. *Door* C., *leading into Garden. Short staircase* L. C., *leading to small gallery* L., *from which is a door leading into the house. The space underneath the gallery is screened from the room by a curtain on a rod. Chairs, couches, tables, etc., and all the paraphernalia of an artist's studio.*

(TREHERNE *is standing at his easel* R. C., *sketching in an outline in colored chalks.* SIR CHARLES, *sitting* R, *glancing at newspaper,* MR. *and* MRS. PARLBURY, *sitting on each side of table* L.)

Parl.—How was it the Erringtons could not dine to-night?

Sir C.—(*shortly.*) He had to go to Deneham to-day on business, and she had neuralgia.

Mrs. P.—Dear me, the last time they were asked she had neuralgia!

Tre.—Quite a coincidence! (*with a side glance at Sir C.*)

Mrs. P.—Neuralgia! More like incipient typhoid!

Parl.—Incipient fiddelsticks!

Mrs. P.—If you can't be civil, you'd better have stayed away.

Parl.—Had I! Was it not at your request that Mrs. Rollitt asked me to dine here to-night, and that I accepted the invitation?

Mrs. P.—The neighbourhood was beginning to talk, and it was necessary to show *(fiercely)* that our separation was amicable.

(Enter MRS. ROLLITT L.*)*

Mrs. R.—*(descending stairs.)* Pray forgive me, my dear people, for deserting you, but I had to see a poor woman who is in trouble.

Sir C.—Pray don't apologise, Mrs. Rollitt; charity covers a multitude of sins.

Mrs. R.—Even that of depriving you of my society. Now that's very nice of you, Sir Charles. *(She has moved so as to look over Treherne's shoulder) (to Treherne)* What are you doing?

Tre.—Making a rough ground plan of the old Abbey from Mr. Parlbury's memoranda. *(aside)* You have news for me?

Mrs. R.—*(aside)* Didn't I say I had seen the poor woman?

Tre.—*(aside)* Ah!

Mrs. R.—*(aside.)* They'll be gone in half an hour. I'll tell you all then. *(aloud.)* Nearly ten o'clock! How late they are in bringing coffee!

Sir C.—Thanks to Miss Ethel and her lawn tennis, we didn't sit down to dinner till half past eight.

Parl.—Ah, I disapprove of lawn tennis for girls; it's ungraceful.

Mrs. P.—A most healthy exercise.

Parl.—*(ignoring her remark.)* And it develops muscles.

Mrs. P.—What of it?

Parl.— What of it? Find me a female with muscles among the ancient Greek statury, if you can, Mrs. Parlbury.

Mrs. P.—Perhaps you'll be good enough to provide them with a few clothes first, Mr. Parlbury.

Parl.—P'shaw! *(Enter* LANGTON and ETHEL C.*)* Where have you been, I'd like to know?

Ethel.—In the garden.

Parl.—Now that's just like you, Mrs. Parlbury, to allow her to stop out so late. I know what it will be; she'll be

thrown on my hands on the 1st. of October with a cold in her head.

Lang.—Oh, no fear of that! I took good care of Miss Ethel.

Sir C.—*(aside to him.)* I'll be bound you did!

(Enter SERVANT R., *with coffee in coffee-pot with spirit-lamp, places it on table* L. C., *and Exits* R.*)*

Mrs. R:—The coffee at last! *(going to table.)*

Parl.—Aha! Now that is how I like my coffee; hot from the pot and not tepid from the tray.

Mrs. P.—Very unwholesome.

Sir C.—Not at all, Mrs. Parlbury, a fine digester.

Mrs. P.—Which Mr. Parlbury must require after the dinner he ate.

Sir C.—Ah! Mrs. Rollitt's cook is an artist.

Parl.—And as a devotee of art, I naturally patronize her works.

Mrs. P.—And destroy your own.

Parl.—*(annoyed.)* Never mind my works.

Ethel.—Mother, some coffee?

Mrs. P.—Dr. Langton, will it be wise?

Lang.—I don't think it will hurt you, Mrs. Parlbury—if you take a tablesoonful of cognac after it.

Mrs. P.—Are you sure? Then I will. *(Ethel hands cup.)*

Sir C.—*(aside.)* You're a clever young man, Mr. Langton and you'll succeed in your profession.

(ETHEL *and* LANGTON, *hand coffee to* SIR CHARLES, *and* MR. PARLBURY, *and take their own.*)

Tre.—*(putting down his chalks.)* There, Mr. Parlbury, I think you'll find that pretty correct. *(Giving plan to* PARLBURY, *and crossing to the table* L. C. *to get his coffee.)*

Parl.—*(delighted scrutinizing plan.)* Excellent! excellent! *(places plan on table* R. C.*)* Look here, everybody. Give me your attention for half an hour and I'll explain this to you. Dear, dear, I wish Errington was here! You must understand—*(to* ETHEL *and* LANGTON *who have come up to him.)* Kindly hold the corners down You must understand that the red lines show that portion of the building that is actually in existence; while the hypothetical portions—

Sir C.—(*stifling a yawn.*) For which you are responsible?

Parl.—For which I am responsible, are sketched out in green.—

Mrs. P.—And a very good colour for them too.

Parl.—(*darting an angry glance at her.*) The monastic buildings were, as you will perceive, all situated to the south of the Abbey Church.

Mrs. P.—(*aside to* MRS. ROLLITT) Let's go to the drawing-room, or I shall do something rash!

(THEY *steal off upstairs, and off* L., *unnoticed by* PARLBURY.)

Parl.—(*Continuing*) Entering through the great Gateway we find on our right the stables, marked B on the plan.

(LANGTON *takes a piece of brick from* PARLBURY'S *pocket, which he passes to* ETHEL *behind* PARLBURY'S *back; she substitutes it for her hand on the corner of the plan, and stealthily retires.* LANGTON *does the same, and they exeunt* C.)

(SIR CHARLES *beginning to doze.* TREHERNE *has gone up and sits in the window seat.*)

Parl.—(*Not noticing that* LANGTON *and* ETHEL *are gone.*) And on the left, the guest room marked C. We now pass through the gardens and enter at D, the cloisters, opening out of which at E is the monks' washing place. (SIR CHARLES *snores gently.*) (PARL, *attracted by the sound, looks up, sees* SIR CHARLES *asleep, and that the others except* TREHERNE *are gone. He snatches up the plan, sending the bricks to the floor.*) Confound it.

Sir C.—(*Starting.*) Eh! What? Found it! What have you found?

Parl.—That I've been throwing pearls before—(*feels that he's going too far.*) Ahem! Ahem! Good-night! (*Going* L.)

Sir C.—Wait for me, we may as well walk back to the the Abbey together.

Parl.—Thank you, but just now I feel I'm only company for myself.

Sir C.—Selfish Sybarite!

(*Exit* PARLBURY L.)

Tre.—Poor old Parlbury! It was rather rough on him! (*Sauntering to door* C.) Good-night, Sir Charles, I'm going for a stroll before turning in.

Sir C.—One moment. I have for some days past been anxious for a little conversation with you, and in fact only accepted Mrs. Rollitt's invitation to dinner to-night, in the hope that an opportunity would present itself, as it has.

Tre.—You talk as if I had avoided you.

Sir C.—So you have—

Tre.—You're extremely frank.

Sir C.—Yes; you're not.

Tre.—Neither am I very patient, Sir Charles. So perhaps you'll say what you want with me, and have done with it.

Sir C.—The day you came to Denethorpe I suggested for reasons we needn't discuss, that you should make some excuse, and go.

Tre.—Quite so; I made an excuse. I said there was no room at the Abbey suitable for my work, and that as I could not afford to be idle, I must go—and I went.

Sir C.—But not far enough.

Tre.—A former inhabitant here was an artist, what more natural than that Mrs. Rollitt, hearing of my difficulty, should place the studio at my disposal? Not far enough! Upon my word, Sir Charles, you are difficult to please. Why even Errington, who didn't like my leaving the Abbey, recovered his spirits when he found I should still be within reach.

Sir C.—Errington can see nothing but what is straight before him, otherwise he would have let the business which took him to Deneham yesterday take care of itself, and have stopped at home.

Tre.—To take care of his wife?

Sir C.—Exactly.

Tre.—I presume you didn't seek this interview merely to inform me of Errington's blindness?

Sir C.—No, to obtain the letter my daughter wrote you.

Tre.—Did she send you for it?

Sir C.—She has never mentioned it to me. But come;

under no circumstances can it be of any use to you—so hand it over.

Tre.—A modest request, upon my word!

Sir C.—Glad to hear it. Never was called modest before.

Tre.—I will read it to you, and then you can judge of its value to me. (*They sit.*) (*Reads.*) "Cyril, my own darling, this hateful marriage is breaking my heart! Mr. Errington is good and kind, but he is not you, and you alone have my love. For you I would sacrifice everything. If you still love me, come to me! come to me! Your own unhappy Gladys." What do you think of it?

Sir C.—Just what I expected; the sort of letter that any silly romantic girl who fancied herself in love might write.

Tre.—But not a letter that a *wife* should write.

Sir C.—A wife! What do you mean? *You know* that letter was written *before* her marriage.

Tre.—Indeed! (*Pretending to examine letter.*) I know that I only received it a week ago, and I observe that, womanlike, she omitted to put either address or date.

Sir C.—And what then?

Tre.—Then it becomes a curiosity, and as such has its value.

Sir C.—Precisely. How much?

Tre.—You misunderstand me. It is not to be bought with money, nor by you.

Sir C.—(*Aside.*) The villain! I understand him only too well! (*Aloud, struck by a sudden thought.*) By the way, you say the letter has neither date nor address; the envelope would show both.

Tre.—Unfortunately, I destroyed it.

Sir C.—Do you expect me to believe that?

Tre.—Really, it's a matter of perfect indifference to me whether you do or not.

Sir C.—I suppose so, though you're scarcely complimentary to yourself.

Tre.—What do you mean?

Sir C.—Merely that the man who is indifferent as to whether others think him a liar and a blackguard must be a very great liar and blackguard indeed.

Tre.—(*Who has made a movement as if to strike* SIR CHARLES, *recollects himself.*) No, no, Sir Charles, it won't do! You'd like me to resent your words, wouldn't you? To insist on your taking a little trip across the Channel with me, eh? I've heard you're a dead shot. I may be all you've called me, but I'm no fool, and I've no intention of playing your game for you; in other words I'm not to be got rid of like that.

Sir C.—(*Going* L.) Very good, Mr. Treherne. Stay here, if you will, but if you dare to attempt anything against my daughter's position and reputation, I warn you, you will find me confoundedly in the way!

(*Exit* L.)

Tre.—(*Snapping his fingers after* SIR CHARLES)! That for your threats! (*Looking after him, and slowly producing letter case, from which he takes the envelope.*) He was right. (*In mock surprise.*) I did not destroy it. (*Returns it to his pocket.*) And I will not; I am not so ungrateful as to destroy the friend who has shown me the way to my revenge.

(*Enter* MRS. ROLLITT, L.)

Tre.—Well? Now for your news!

Mrs. T.—What news? (*In a constrained manner.*)

Tre.—Did you not tell me that you had seen Gladys, and that you had news for me?

Mrs. R.—True; but I overheard your conversation with Sir Charles just now.

Tre.—And it frightened you? (*With a sneer?*)

Mrs. R.—It certainly suggested to me that I was risking a good deal to help you in rather a mad scheme.

Tre.—To help *me*?

Mrs. R.—Certainly!

Tre.—And no one else?

Mrs. R.—What do you mean?

Tre.—Mrs. Rollitt, I this morning heard from Mr. Parlbury of the tender passages between you and Errington at Malta.

Mrs. R.—The old wretch!

Tre.—The knowledge of that weakness on your part, made me reflective, and then I saw clearly that you were not so disinterested as you would have me believe.

Mrs. R.—And what then? I did hope to marry him, and had not your complacent assurance that Miss Aislabie loved you, lulled my suspicions, she would not now be his wife. Your egotistical folly ruined me, as well as you; If I can now serve myself as well as you, it is not for you to blame me.

Tre.—I am far from blaming you, for your disappointment assures me your help in my revenge upon Errington for this treachery, at the same time, understand that I am not your dupe.

Mrs. R.—Nor am I your slave. You thought you had frightened me, but that was part of the farce.

Tre.—Well! Well! Tell me what passed between you.

Mrs. R.—I told her that if she wanted her letter, she must come to you, and that if she did not come, it would find its way to her husband. At first she refused to listen, but when I pointed out to her the circumstances which made the letter so terribly compromising, and hinted that her husband knew of her former love for you (*with a sneer*), she, being young and inexperienced, got frightened and begged me to advise her.

Tre.—And you?

Mrs. R.—I told her that in such a case her heart must be her guide.

Tre.—Ah, then she is coming?

Mrs. R.—Yes, in fear and trembling; but I succeeded in convincing her that she ran but little risk (*with intention*) unless her husband were by any chance to return to-night instead of to-morrow.

Tre.—And that is not likely. (*Down stage.*)

Mrs. R.—(*Aside*). More likely than you think for, if *my* letter has not miscarried.

Tre.—When will she be here?

Mrs. R.—At 11 to-night.

Tre.—At last, Gladys, at last! (*Going down* C.) I must breathe the air or I shall choke.

(*Exit* C.)

(MRS. ROLLITT *goes to the window and looks out after him*).

(*Enter* SIR CHARLES L., *hat on and coat over his arm. He does not see* MRS. ROLLITT *and descends the steps meditatively.*)

Sir C.—Wish I could get at the truth about that letter. Shall I ask Gladys? (*Shrugs his shoulders.*) A forlorn hope. Somehow all confidence between her and me seems at an end, and that makes me anxious, very anxious! (*Sees* MRS. ROLLITT). Mrs. Rollitt! What part is she playing, I wonder? It might strengthen my hand to find out. (*Moves books etc., on table, noisily.*)

Mrs. R.—(*Turning*). Sir Charles! How you startled me!

Sir C.—Is that you, Mrs. Rollitt? Very sorry, I'm sure, but I left my cigarette case—Ah! here it is!—With your permission I'll light a cigarette, and wish you good-night.

Mrs. R.—Let me give you a light.

Sir C.—Thanks. (*Business.*) Treherne making a long stay with you?

Mrs. R.—I don't know. Having invited him here I can't very well ask him when he's going.

Sir C.—Of course not, and yet if I were you, I should endeavor to hasten his departure.

Mrs. R.—But why?

Sir C.—I fancy Mrs. Parlbury is right, and that this house is not in a sanitary condition.

Mrs. R.—In that case, *I* ought not to stay.

Sir C.—It's risky, decidedly risky.

Mrs. R.—You don't say so! Come, Sir Charles, do you really expect me to swallow all this nonsense?

Sir C.—Not for one moment; I have far too high an opinion of your understanding to offer it such an insult.

Mrs. R.—Thank you. Now, then, you want me to get rid of Treherne?

Sir C.—As quickly as possible.

Mrs. R.—On Mrs. Errington's account?

Sir C.—On his own.

Mrs. R.—He is old enough to take care of himself.

Sir C.—And yet he has made you his confidant. Oh, yes he has; why else should you couple his name with hers? What do you propose to do?

Mrs. R.—Nothing.

Sir C.—You refuse to help me?

Mrs. R.—I refuse to mix myself up in a matter which does not concern me.

Sir C.—Then why have you done so? Do you think I cannot trace your handiwork in all this? Do you think I cannot fathom your motives, hatred of the man whose heart you failed to touch, hatred of the woman that won the man! But don't exult yet. Your scheme of revenge is not complete, and never will be, while I stand between you and her! Send away this Treherne, or I—

Mrs. R.—Or what?

Sir C.—Or repent it!

Mrs. R.—Why, what would you do? (*In a bantering tone.*)

Sir C.—A few months ago, you begged me to be silent on your past life.

Mrs. R.—And you gave me your word of honour to do so.

Sir C.—What is my honour to me, in comparison with the happiness of the child I love!

Mrs. R.—Then if I refuse to obey you, you would betray me?

Sir C.—Without a moment's hesitation.

Mrs. R.—(*laughing*) My dear Sir Charles, I like you; you are so frank, and, for a man of the world, so unsophisticated. Circumstances have changed since I implored your secrecy. I was not aware then of the veneration in which your daughter held you. I did not know that in her eyes you were a very Bayard, a Sir Galahad, the embodiment of all that is good and pure and noble. Tell her, then, of my

shameful past, and of your share in it, and see yourself, her ideal, fall shattered from the pedestal of her heart. She may regain a husband, but she will lose a father, and you a daughter. What do you say, Sir Charles? Is it I who should now implore your silence? Or you mine?

(*As she speaks* SIR CHARLES *becomes petrified.* MRS. ROLLITT *regards him with a look of triumph as she exits* L.)

Sir C.—(*With a groan.*) That cursed past of mine! but I mustn't for a moment allow her to think that I would not make the sacrifice if necessary. (*About to follow* MRS. ROLLITT) And yet; I cannot! There must be other means of warding off this danger from Gladys; yes, yes, there must be other means! (*Turns to go and meets* ERRINGTON *who enters* C.) Arnold! You here? I thought you were going to stop the night at Deneham?

Erring.—(*Shortly.*) My plans have changed. Where's Treherne?

Sir C.—Somewhere in the garden, I believe. (ERRINGTON *at a loss, as if pondering what to do.*) What do you want with him?

Erring.—Oh, nothing.

Sir C.—Let's go home, then. (*Moves to door* C.)

Erring.—Stay, there is something—

Sir C.—(*Aside.*) Thought so. (*Aloud.*) Well?

Erring.—Sir Charles, have you—(*Pauses, then with an effort*) have you noticed any change in Gladys lately?

Sir C.—(*Ill at ease.*) Change? No—?

Erring.—Not that she has become cold and distant to me, ever since—?

Sir C.—Since when?

Erring.—Since Treherne came here—(*quickly.*) But no doubt it is only fancy—

Sir C.—Of course. Cold! Distant! Rubbish! Liver! She's been out of sorts lately, that's all. But you didn't return from Deneham merely to tell me this? (*Looks at* ERRINGTON, *who averts his gaze; then suddenly;*) No, by George, there's something else!

Erring.—Aye, there is; something I hate to think of, for when I think of it, I despise myself.

Sir C.—Don't think of it. *Speak* of it. What is it?

Erring.—A few hours ago I received at my hotel in Deneham an anonymous letter. (*Takes it from his pocket.*)

Sir C.—And this is what brought you back?

Erring.—Yes. Oh, I know the value of anonymous letters. I know them to be vile and malicious; they rouse in me contempt and disgust. And yet, yet, when I try to forget this, I can't; against my will, against my reason, it has taken possession of my thoughts, and weighs on my brain like a sense of evil.

Sir C.—Do you suspect anyone?

Erring.—No; the handwriting is strange to me, and till to-day I did not know I had an enemy in the world.

Sir C.—Let me see. (*Takes it.*)

Erring.—You want to read it? (*Arresting his hand.*)

Sir C.—I want a clue to the writer. (*Reads to himself quietly at first, more and more hurriedly, as he gets to the end.*) What! (*crumpling letter in his hand.*) Gladys an assignation with Treherne here in his studio at 11 to-morrow night!

Erring.—No, to-night! It is dated yesterday.

Sir C.—An infamous calumny! (*Aside.*) A disguised hand, but a woman's! (*Looking again at letter.*) (*Reads.*) "From an unknown friend." (*Aside.*) No, Mrs. Rolfitt; neither a friend, nor unknown!

Erring.—Well?

Sir C.—What do you mean to do?

Erring.—There's only one thing to be done. (*Takes letter.*)

Sir C.—To destroy it?

Erring.—No, to show it to Treherne.

Sir C.—You *do* mistrust him?

Erring.—No, no, but it is right and fair that he should see it; the enemy may be his, not mine. (*Takes letter.*)

Sir C.—(*Aside.*) (*Ringing the bell.*) Not a bad idea, it may pull the fellow up short—(*aloud.*) (*Enter* SERVANT L.) Do you happen to know if Mr. Treherne has come in?

Servant.—I don't think so, sir. He's not in his bedroom, and he'd be sure to be either there or here.

Sir C.—Ah! Thank you.

Servant.—Beg pardon, sir, but may I take the lamp?

Sir C.—Certainly. (SERVANT *takes large lamp, leaving* TREHERNE'S *reading lamp, and exits, lights half down.* ERRINGTON *sits.*) You are going to wait his return?

Erring.—Yes.

Sir C.—Why not leave it till to-morrow?

Erring.—No, no, I couldn't sleep with this on my mind.

Sir C.—At all events we might stroll up to the Abbey and return. You don't wish to disturb Gladys to-night, and you'd better arrange for a shake-down before all the servants are in bed.

Erring.—As you please.

Sir C.—Come along, then—(*aside*) I may yet be in time to prevent her coming here.

(*Exeunt by door* C.)

(ETHEL *enters by window* R.C., *followed by* LANGTON.)

Ethel.—(*Stopping in the window and holding out her hand.*) Now, Dr. Langton, you must say good-night; remember you've a long drive home, and it's nearly 11 o'clock.

Lang.—Very well, Miss Ethel, if I must, I must. I shall see you to-morrow?

Ethel.—Shall you? Do I look ill?

Lang.—No, no; but I'm coming over to see Mrs. Errington, and I hope—

Ethel.—To find her better? I hope so too. By the way, what's the matter with Mrs. Errington?

Lang.—Honestly, I'm puzzled; there is something I can't make out; but you, now, Miss Ethel, to whom she has taken such a fancy, can you not give me a hint?

Ethel.—Even were I able, do you think I should tell you anything she has not chosen to tell you herself?

Lang.—Are you able?

Ethel.—(*After a pause.*) No, no—Dr. Langton, you must study human nature on your own account.

Lang.—I try to, but feminine human nature is utterly beyond my comprehension. For instance, why don't you marry me?

Ethel.—Judging by my parents, do you think matrimony particularly tempting?

Lang.—Their case is exceptional.

Ethel.—It may be, but perhaps that sort of thing is hereditary—my father says I take after my mother, and my mother that I take after my father, and I suppose they ought to know.

Lang.—Not necessarily; they only see each other's shortcomings.

Ethel.—The inference being that I have the faults of both——?

Lang.—No, no, I didn't mean—

Ethel.—(*Interrupting.*) Don't make it worse. But just think, Dr. Langton, if, after I married you, the terrible taint of antiquarianism were to break out in me?

Lang.—Then I'd turn antiquary, and we'd grow old together.

Ethel.—Or worse still, if I were to develop a bias toward imaginary ailments and patent medicines?

Lang.—Then you'd have a doctor on the premises to cure the one, and throw the other out of the window. Come, Ethel, you know I love you—I

Ethel.—Yes, you told me so yesterday, and the day before, and the day before that.

Lang.—And I mean to tell you to-morrow, and the day after, and every day until—

Ethel.—Until?—

Lang.—You tell me you love me. (*A pause.*) Come, Ethel, it's cruel to keep me in suspense.

Ethel.—It's cruel to keep me up so late.

Lang.—P'shaw! (*Goes outside the window, then turns.*) Will you give me a definite answer to-morrow?

Ethel.—Yes! (LANGTON *delighted.*) Or the day after. Good-night, Dr. Langton! (*Shuts the window as he turns away and goes in disgust.*) Poor fellow! It's too bad to treat him so? But it's all my parent's fault. If they hadn't

so persistently thrown me at his head, I should have given him an answer long ago. As it is, I object to being disposed of by them, merely to relieve them of a responsibility which they've brought on themselves.

(GLADYS *enters* C. *abruptly, and stops short on seeing* ETHEL.)

Gladys.—Ethel! You here?

Ethel.—*I'm* staying here, Mrs. Errington, but *you?*

Gladys.—Ethel, don't *you* misunderstand me—

Ethel.—Mrs. Errington, what am I to think? The day after Mr. Treherne's arrival I was with you in the Abbey grounds, when a letter was given you by a girl whom I knew to have been hired by him from Deneham as a model. You seemed much troubled, but after a few moments of doubt you turned to me, handing me the letter, begged me by some means or other to restore it to Mr. Treherne. (*Pause.*) I am not like most girls, my bringing up has taught me a good deal of the world, and I own to you I was suspicious, but as you did not open the letter, I could see no harm in doing as you desired. Since then I have done the same thing every other day. You begged me to be silent on the subject, and I have respected your wish; I have done more; I have not attempted to learn your secret. I don't want to know it. But when I find you here, alone and at this hour, I ask myself, have I done right?

Gladys.—Yes, if to do right is to have followed the impulse of your generous heart, and helped me, a weak, defenseless woman, to battle with an evil that threatens to destroy my happiness; you have nothing to reproach yourself with. I am here because I cannot help myself.

Ethel.—Cannot your husband help you?

Gladys.—No, no! He, least of all!

Ethel.—Your father?

Gladys.—Dear father! So good, so noble! I dared not tell him! I feared his anger for myself and still more the violence of this man's passionate nature for him.

Ethel.—What may be the tie between you and Mr. Treherne I don't know, except that it cannot be for good. Break it, I implore you! Come with me; there is yet time. No, don't repulse me! Dear Mrs. Errington, on my knees I beg of you to come with me!

Gladys.—Impossible! Impossible! This is the last time I shall willingly see him, but see him I must, and alone! (*With a sudden impulse.*) Ethel, I know I can trust you; I am here to obtain from Mr. Treherne a letter, harmless in reality; most terribly compromising in appearance; a letter which, were it to come to my husband's knowledge, would wreck our lives. Fear nothing for me; my one object at this moment is to save his honor, and mine! For my sake, go! (*exhausted she falls into a chair, and covers her face with her hands.*)

(ETHEL, *after hesitation, exits* L.)

Gladys.—(*Looks round slowly.*) Gone? (*Sigh of relief.*) My coming here would have been useless had she stayed; he would never have given me the letter. But where is he? What can be detaining him? (*Up to window.*)

(MRS. ROLLITT *opens door* L., *looks in cautiously and sees* GLADYS.)

Mrs. R.—(*aside.*) One bird in the trap. (*Withdraws, closing and locking door outside.*)

Gladys.—(*Turning at the sound.*) What's that? (*At the same moment* TREHERNE *enters* C.)

Tre.—(*Coming for, and speaking tenderly.*) Gladys!

Gladys.—(*Shrinking.*) Don't mistake me, Mr. Treherne; I am here for one purpose only, to regain possession of that fatal letter. You sent word to me that I must come for it. You threatened me if I did not come—

Tre.—I was desperate when I did so. You had refused to see me. The letters I wrote you were returned to me, I know not how. I felt that I must speak to you once again, or I should go mad, and I used the only means left to me to secure an interview.

Gladys.—A cowardly plea! You know our meeting can only bring pain to both, and yet to gratify your wounded vanity, and show your power over me, you have forced me to come here.

Tre.—No, no, you mistake? Gladys, have pity on me! It was a mean, despicable action, I know, but it was born of my love, my passionate love, for you!

Gladys.—What love can that be, that has so vile an offspring?

Tre.—Is the sin of the child to be visited on the parent?

Gladys.—I cannot argue with you. I only know your so-called love is wholly selfish. Were I a man I would have welcomed death, sooner than have risked sullying the name of the woman I professed to love! Give me my letter and let me go.

Tre.—Go if you will, but not like that; in memory of past days—not like that—!

Gladys.— My letter!

Tre.—You shall have it, but speak one word of comfort to me; look on me once more as you looked on me when first we met in the Chapel of the Brussels Convent! Don't you remember, Gladys, you came in with one of the sisters? Till that moment I had had little pleasure in my work, but your presence glorified the surroundings, and gave warmth to the wintry sunshine that lit the bare, white-washed interior of the Chapel. It lent a depth of colour to the poor daubs that I was restoring, and it illumined in my breast a flame that neither time, grief, nor disappointment has been able to quench! I see you have not forgotten; let memory aid me further, and whisper in your ear how well you loved me—loved me! and how on the altar of my heart you placed the first fruits of your maiden fancy! Gladys! my Gladys! You have come to me! Stay with me, my love! my life! (*kisses her.*)

(*During this speech* GLADYS *has been carried away by* TREHERNE'S *pleading, and at the close is almost in his arms. His kiss recalls her to herself, and she recoils from him.*)

Gladys.—Ah, no! not that! not that! What have you done? And what am I to have suffered it?

Tre.—Gladys, is it too late? Leave this man who has come between us! He won you from me by treachery!

Gladys.—It's a lie! How dare you speak such words to me?

Tre.—Gladys! Gladys! Hear me!

Gladys.—I will hear nothing! Let me go, I say! Fool that I was to yield to your threats, believing in the specious promises by which you enticed me here! Keep the letter, Mr. Treherne, and make what use of it you like. This is the last time you will have a chance of outraging and insulting me as you have done this night!

(*She goes to door* C., *opens it, shuts it quickly.*)

Gladys.—My husband!

Tre.—Come this way—! (*Running upstairs and trying door* L.) Ah!—Locked on the outside! (*Descends.*)

Gladys.—Locked! Ah! I see it all! This is a scheme of yours to entrap and ruin me!

Tre.—No, no! In here! (*Puts her behind curtain* L., *takes chalk, and pretends to be sketching.*)

(SIR CHARLES *enters* C.)

Sir C.—(*Seizing* TREHERNE'S *arm.*) Gladys! She's here? (TREHERNE *shrugs shoulders.*) Ten minutes since, I found her room empty. Be thankful it *was* I, and not her husband! Where is she?

(TREHERNE *starts, and involuntary looks towards curtain.*)

Sir C.—Ah! I see! Hush! Errington!

(ERRINGTON *enters* C.)

Tre.—(*With an assumption of ease.*) Ah, Arnold! You too! Anything wrong?

Erring.—Nothing, my dear Cyril, that we two cannot put right. Look, to-day I received this letter. (*giving it to* TRE.) My first impulse was to treat it with the contempt it deserves, and to destroy it, but it concerns you so deeply that I decided you should see it without delay.

Tre.—(*Who has skimmed the letter, aside.*) Betrayed! By whom?

Erring.—Well?

Tre.—I – I don't understand it. (*Hands letter back to* ERRINGTON.)

Erring.—Is that all you have to say to so monstrous an accusation?

Sir C.—(*Aside.*) The fool will betray himself!

Tre.—You, you don't believe it?

Erring.—Should that hinder you from denouncing the falsehood? My heavens! Were I in your place, no words would be too strong, no voice too loud, in which to give the lie to such a charge!

Tre.—You are so hasty—You give me no time!

Erring.—For what? To prepare an answer? No one should want time in such a case—unless the charge were true.

Tre.—(*Blustering.*) Do you mean to insult me?

Erring.—There is no insult if the charge be false. Speak!

Tre.—It *is* false!

Erring.—A lie! She is here.

Sir. C—(*Coming between them.*) My dear Arnold, Mr. Treherne is right, you are too hasty, much too hasty. Your suspicion of an old friend is not worthy of you, but, since you've lost your sense, damme! search the place! There's a curtain, (*pointing to recess* L.) and here's a cupboard, (*crossing to press* R. *and opening it.*) Empty! Try the curtain!

Tre.—(*Aside to* SIR CHARLES) Are you mad?

Sir C.—(*Aside*) No, desperate! I know him better than you.

(ERRINGTON *after a few moments of indecision, during which he glances from* SIR CHARLES *to* TREHERNE, *goes to curtain and lays his hand upon it to draw it back. After a pause he dashes curtain from him and turns to* TREHERNE.)

Erring.—No, I am no detective. Take my hand, look into my face, and tell me on your word of honour that I am mistaken!

Tre.—(*Taking his hand*) On my word of honour! You are mistaken!

Erring.—(*Shaking his hand*) Then I ask your pardon. (*Tears the letter, goes to door* C.) Forget it. Come, Sir Charles!

(*Exit* ERRINGTON C.)

Sir C.—(*To* TREHERNE, *pointing to curtain.*) Act promptly!

(*Exit* C.)

(*The moment the door closes behind* SIR CHARLES, GLADYS *comes out and goes straight to it.* TREHERNE *interposes.*)

Gladys.—Let me pass!

Tre.—Hear me!

Gladys.—No, I have escaped detection by a hair's breadth; do your worst, I will listen to you no more—!

Tre.—(*Aside.*) If she goes like this, I lose her forever. (*A sudden thought strikes him.*) Ah! You will go?

Gladys.—Yes, and to my husband!

Tre.—Go, then, (*throwing door open*) and see how your husband receives you!

Gladys.—What do you mean?

Tre.—That when I perjured myself for your sake, he did not believe me—

Gladys.—But—he accepted your denial?

Tre.—You only heard his words—but when I took his hand it was cold and nerveless; when I looked in his face, his eyes fell. Oh, yes, he knew that I had lied!

Gladys.—Then, why—why? (*Unable to finish.*)

Tre.—Why did he not draw the curtain? Because he dared not! Because he knew that you were there! Because to expose you was to make his dishonour public. Now choose between his scorn and my love—(*She turns to go.*) Stay, your letter—(*handing it out to her.*) Take it,—you have earned it!

Gladys.—(*Taking letter.*) At what a price! Oh God! At what a price!

(*Exit as Curtain falls* TREHERNE *standing doggedly with his back to her, down* L.)

CURTAIN.

END OF ACT III.

ACT IV.

OCTOBER. *A month is supposed to have elapsed.*

SCENE. *Same as* ACT I. SIR CHARLES, *convalescent after an illness, on sofa.* LANGTON, *by him.*

Lang.—(*concluding examination of his patient*) Capital! Sir Charles, capital! I shall have you well now in no time!

Sir C.—You're a good fellow, Langton, a deuced good fellow. It isn't everyone who would have given a fortnight out of a hard earned holiday to play the good Samaritan, especially when his heart was elsewhere, eh! Are you not sorry you took Naples on your way to Sicily?

Lang.—Not a bit. I wrote and told Miss Parlbury how and why I was prevented joining her and her father, as soon as I had intended.

Sir C.—She's a dear girl, and will make you a good wife.

Lang.—If she ever makes up her mind to be my wife.

Sir C.—If? My dear fellow, there are some things about women you must take for granted. Some say "Yes" when they mean "No"; and others say "No" when they mean "Yes;" but when they say neither one nor the other, it's a hundred to one they mean "Yes." You're a lucky dog, sir, though you don't know it.

Lang.—I think I am, if you're right, for she's one in a thousand, though her parents don't half appreciate her. In fact, I belive they will be glad to get rid of her.

Sir C.—Happy people!

Lang.—Happy?

Sir C.—Yes, I envy them. Had I cared as little for my daughter, I should not now be breaking my heart! (*much agitated.*)

Lang.—Sir Charles, I can't have you excite yourself; I have purposely avoided speaking of this hitherto.

Sir C.—It is a relief to me. Ah, Langton, it is a terrible thing to lose a child, but I had rather Gladys had died twice over, than that she should be lost to me in such a way!

Lang.—(*hesitating*) But is it certain that she went away with Treherne?

Sir C.—Everything points to it. As you know, Arnold and I went immediately to London, but failed to find any trace. There he left me, to follow, I fear, an imaginary clue, while I returned to my old quarters, thinking perhaps that if repentance came to her, she might seek me here. Then I fell ill, the grief, shame, and the scandal was too much for me!

Lang.—Somehow I can't help connecting that Mrs. Rollitt with her disappearance. I never liked that woman. By the way, I met her this morning.

Sir C.—Here? In Naples? (*aside*) This confirms my suspicions. (*aloud*) But come; now that I am convalescent, you must be off to Sicily.

Lang.—No, I'm not going to leave you, Sir Charles, till you're thoroughly on your legs again.

Sir C.—Nonsense, my boy! I won't hear of it! I've been a selfish sort of fellow—selfishness is part of the creed of the world I've lived in—but illness and trouble have taught me a hard lesson, and I've taken it to heart. Go my boy, go; your Penelope must not be made to pine longer for her Ulysses.

Lang.—Thank you, Sir Charles, but as a matter of fact, Ulysses prefers Naples to Sicily just now.

Sir C.—Why, you don't mean to say that Penelope—?

Lang.—Yes, I do, and if I'm not mistaken that's her step.

(*Goes to door* L. C., *and admits* ETHEL.)

Ethel.—(*passing* LANGTON *and going to* SIR CHARLES) Oh, Sir Charles, I'm so glad to see you better, for you are better, aren't you?

Sir C.—Very much, my dear, thanks to him, (*indicating* LANGTON) who, by the way, you seem to have overlooked.

Ethel.—Oh, I saw him on my arrival this morning.

Sir C.—Did you, by George! But what brings you here?

Ethel.—Hasn't Dr. Langton explained?

Lang.—Haven't had time.

Ethel.—(*indignant*) I believe you forgot!—Oh, Sir Charles, the most terrible thing has happened!—my poor father has been captured by the Brigands!

Sir C.—Brigands! Nonsense!—How did it happen?

Ethel.—We were staying at Taormina, and my father hearing of some ruins a few miles up the country, and nothing would do but he must go and see them. So off he started (*sobbing*) on a donkey, (*sobs*) poor fellow, with two guides, armed, and when he got there, there were no ruins, only brigands, and the guides belonged to the gang, and so they kept father and sent the donkey back in charge of a boy, with a letter to me. (*sobs all through this speech*) I tried to get the authorities at Messina to move in the matter; they said they must communicate with the authorities at Palermo, but I couldn't wait for that, and knowing Dr. Langton and you, were at Naples, I came here to get his,—and your advice!

Sir C.—We must lay the case before our Minister at Rome.

Lang.—I'll go over by the next train. By the way, Mrs. Parlbury ought to know.

Ethel.—Oh, I telegraphed to her the moment it occurred, —"Father seized by brigands, ransom £2,000. Come at once to Corso Victor Emanuel, Naples, No. 12." You see, I didn't know what hotel to go to, so I thought she had better meet me here. Was I right, Sir Charles?

Sir C.—Perfectly, my dear—I know the Minister at Rome, and will give you a letter of introduction, Langton. (*Going to writing table.*) Stay though, your arm; I'll write in my bedroom, (*aside*) unless you particularly wish me to stay.

(*Exit* R. U. E.)

Lang.—Cheer up, Miss Parlbury; your father's in a scrape, no doubt, but £2,000 won't ruin him.

Ethel.—Ruin *him!* Of course not; *he* can't pay—!

Lang.—Oh! But surely Mrs. Parlbury will?

Ethel.—I hope so; I'm sure she would if it were for drainage or ventilation, but when it comes to father, I have my doubts.

Lang.—Well, I haven't got much, but I have enough put by, to ransom him, and if she won't pay, I will.

Ethel.—You're very good and kind—but no one but a relation—a near relation—has any right to make such a sacrifice.

Lang.—Then make me a near relation;—make me his son. Come, Ethel, you know you like me, and I love you awfully!

Ethel.—Is this a time to speak of such things, when I'm in such distress about my father?

Lang.—Certainly. Give me the right to restore him to you—Come, say the word!

Ethel.—Yes!

Lang.—Good! Here goes for Rome, the Minister, and the money! Wish me good luck!

Ethel.—With all my heart! (*Holds out her hand.*)

Lang.—(*Taking it.*) Is your heart in your hand? (*She laughs, he draws her to him and kisses her.*) No, I thought not;—it's where it naturally would be, under such trying circumstances, (*kisses her again*)—in your mouth.

(*Going* L. C., *when the door opens and* MARTIN, *followed by* MRS. PARLBURY, *appears.*)

Martin—Miss Parlbury is here, ma'am.

Ethel—(*Delighted!*) Mother! (*Rushes to her.*)

Lang.—(*Following* ETHEL'S *lead.*) Mother! MRS. PARLBURY *astonished.*) I beg your pardon, Mrs. Parlbury, but I'm really so confused!

Mrs. P.—I don't wonder at it. Pretty piece of business, isn't it? Parlbury was never fit to be trusted alone. If Judson had gone to Sicily with him, instead of throwing him over at the last minute, this never would have happened. What have you done?

Ethel.—Nothing yet; Dr. Langton is just off to the Embassy at Rome.

Mrs. P.—What's the use of that? The Embassy will write yards to the Italian Government, and the Italian Government will write yards to the Embassy, and after all that where shall we be?—or where will poor Christopher be?—murdered—most likely!

Ethel.—Oh, mother!

Mrs. P.—Or tortured!—

Ethel.—Tortured!!

Mrs. P.—And Christoper, who used to make such a fuss over a mustard plaster! (*To* LANGTON.) Can't you suggest anything?

Lang.—Pay the ransom.

Mrs. P.—£2,000—it seems a good deal for Christopher.

Ethel.—Oh, mother, how can you?—

Mrs. P.—Ah, well, give me a pen; I thought it might come to this, so I brought with me a letter of credit from my bankers, to their correspondents here.

Lang.—(*Giving pen, etc.*) Here you are, Mrs. Parlbury.

(PARLBURY *opens door* L. C., *and looks in.* HE *is surprised to see them, and stands watching them.* THEY *none of them see him.*)

Mrs. P.—(*Writing.*) £2,000,—poor Christopher! (*Suddenly stopping as if struck by an idea.*) I suppose there really are brigands?—

Lang.—Oh, Mrs. Parlbury, you can't think that your husband would—?

Mrs. P.—(*Hastily.*) No, no, of course not!—poor Christopher!—two thousand pounds!—(*wiping her eyes.*) Ah, Dr. Langton, it seems to me I never before knew his true value—!

Parl.—Nor I yours, my dear old woman!

(MRS. PARLBURY *jumps up, screams, and falls into his arms.* ETHEL *hangs round him, and* LANGTON *gets hold of his arm.*)

Parl.—So you'd actually have paid £2,000 for me to those beastly brigands?

Mrs. P.—I would indeed, Christopher, I would indeed!—

(*Enter* SIR CHARLES R. U. E., *with letter.*)

Sir C.—Here's the letter, Langton. Why, what's this? Mrs. Parlbury?—and Mr. Parlbury escaped? (*Shaking hands.*)

Parl.—Yes, Sir Charles, yes; I suppose Ethel has told you how I fell into the rascals' clutches?

Mrs. P.—No; but I'll be bound "ruins" were at the bottom of it —!

Parl.—Well, my dear, I must admit that—

Mrs. P.—I knew it, but there, never mind! Let's hear how you got away.

Parl.—Briefly then, when I was collared by those light-fingered, heavy-handed, cut throats, they carried me off to their camp in the mountains, where for three days I resigned myself to dirt, discomfort and garlic. On the third day, my hosts gave a little entertainment in celebration of their Captain's birthday,—he will never celebrate another, for in the midst of the revels the camp was surprised and attacked by the Carabinieri. In the confusion I gave my guards the slip, and took to my heels. They favored me with a couple of bullets—

Mrs. P.—Where? Christopher, where?

Parl.—Through my hat. (*Showing it.*) As my other garments had no margin for bullets, I judiciously dropped, and was picked up by the soldiers, who, on hearing my story, escorted me to Palermo, where I explained matters to the Consul, and here I am.

Sir C.—I congratulate you most heartily. It must have been a most unpleasant experience.

Parl.—It was, but, by Jove, Sir Charles! It is worth undergoing, if only for the pleasure of returning to such a wife, and such a daughter.

Lang.—And such a son!

Mrs. P. }
Parl. } —Ethel!

Ethel.—It's quite true. I always cared for Gerald, though I did snub him, but when he offered, as he did this morning, *(*LANGTON *tries to stop her)*, to give up all his savings to release my father, I felt that—I felt that—*(turns to* LANGTON, *and hides her face on his shoulder.)*

Parl.—*(seizing* LANGTON'S *hand.)* God bless you, my boy. *(Kisses* ETHEL.*)*

Mrs P.—You've made me very happy!

(ETHEL *and* LANGTON *turn up stage.)*

Parl.—When Ethel is married I shall be very lonely for six months in the year.

Mrs. P.—So shall I—Christopher, an idea! Suppose you come and stay with me for that lonely six months?

Parl.—Done! If you'll stay with me the other six months.

Mrs. P.—Do you mean it?

Parl.—Certainly. Henceforth I abjure antiquarianism, and we'll grow young again together.

Mrs. P.—And I'll throw over the Family Doctor.

Lang.—Not altogether, I hope, Mrs. Parlbury?

Mrs. P.—I mean that I'm not going to fancy myself ill any more, and that reminds me that I've a most healthy appetite; in fact, I've had nothing since six this morning.

Parl.—Nor I.—Let us go and breakfast at a restaurant.

Mrs. P.—Good-bye for the present, Sir Charles. Ah, Christopher, I haven't breakfasted for fifteen years! —

Parl.—*(Looking her up and down.)* Good Lord, my dear —!

Mrs. P.—With you!

(*Exeunt* MR. *and* MRS. PARLBURY, L. C.)

Sir C.—By Jove, who'd have thought it! Hymen's smouldering torch fanned into flame again, and by a parcel of brigands! Where are you off to? *(Seeing* LANGTON *taking his hat and stick.*

Lang.—Got a little business to do. *(Aside.)* Engagement ring, you know. Shant feel easy till that's on. *(Aloud.)*

Will you stop and look after my patient, Ethel? I won't be long. *(takes her hand.)* Sir Charles, have you noticed how near Vesuvius looks to-day?

Sir C.—My dear Langton, if you want me to look out of the window, I'll do so with pleasure, but blow Vesuvius! (*He turns to the window,* LANGTON *kisses* ETHEL *and exits* L. C.)

Sir C.—Is he gone? Can I look around? Ah, he's the best fellow in the world! You'll be very happy, my dear, if you only remember that a wife should have no secrets from her husband!

Ethel.—(*Archly*) Nor a husband from his wife?

Sir C.—Ahem! Not many—

Ethel.—Not any. If he loves her. To my mind true love should be a stronghold, at whose gates neither doubt, suspicion, nor distrust can enter, whether it be the love of husband and wife, or father and child. (*With meaning.*)

Sir C.—Ethel, your words have a deeper meaning than they express. What is it?

Ethel.—Gladys.

Sir C.—What of her?

Ethel.—I know that you suspect her wrongly.

Sir C.—And yet she went away?

(SIR CHARLES *makes a movement.*)

Ethel.—Ah, Sir Charles, manlike you bring logic to bear on the most illogical of subjects—the working of a woman's heart. What wonder then that your reasoning leads you astray, where my woman's instinct guides me to the truth. I know she detests the man with whom you think she fled, and knowing it, nothing in the world would make me believe ill of her—she is innocent! I feel it, I know it!

(*Enter* MARTIN *with card.*)

Sir C.—P'shaw! *(Impatiently.)* I'm engaged, and cannot be disturbed.

Martin.—Wants to see you alone, and at once, Sir Charles.

Sir C.—Arnold! *(to* ETHEL.) I must see him. *(Makes a gesture to* MARTIN *who exits* L. C.) But don't go; wait in here. *(Puts her off* R. U. E.)

(*Enter* ERRINGTON L. C.)

Sir C.—Arnold! What news?

Erring.—I have tracked him to Naples.

Sir C.—And *she* was with him?

Erring.—I couldn't discover.

Sir C.—Good! There's comfort in that—had she been, you could hardly have failed to obtain some clue!—you're looking wretchedly ill, my boy; you must stay with me a few days and rest yourself.

Erring.—Rest! I shall never rest till I have settled my scores with him.

Sir C.—Remember there must be no scandal.

Erring.—There shall be none. To that end I have written to him to meet me here.

Sir C.—But the cause of quarrel?

Erring.—We shall find one. In Italy an unfaithful wife is not the only thing men quarrel and fight about.

Sir C.—After all, my dear Arnold, we may be mistaken.

Erring.—*(Eagerly.* Do you think it possible? My heart yearns towards her, yet if she be innocent, what could have induced her to take such a step? To tell the truth, as I stand in this room where I first saw her, there rises within me a hope, almost a belief, that she is innocent. *(Drawing back curtain from* GLADYS' *portrait.)* I look on this fair face and I say to myself, it is impossible that he could be so false, and she so frail. It was in this room a few month since, you and I, two men of the world, were coldly planning out her future. She came, and the influence of her bright presence changed the current of my thoughts and made its way unhindered to my heart. *(He drops the curtain.)* The vision is gone! Will it ever return? *(Goes up agitated to window, and on to balcony out of sight.)*

(*The door* L. C. *opens, and* GLADYS *appears.*)

Gladys.—*(Faintly.)* Father!

Sir C.—(*Starting up.*) Gladys!

Gladys.—(*Coming forward.*) Father, speak to me—! (*lays her hand on his arm; he looks furtively round, but* ERRINGTON *has moved out of sight and hearing on to balcony.*)

Sir C.—Gladys, at last you have come! Now at least we shall know the truth! Where have you been?

Gladys.—At the Convent at Brussels, where I passed so many happy days. Oh, that I had never left it! I was kindly received, and for a time thought I had found rest and peace; but two days ago I learnt from an English paper that you were seriously ill at Naples, and so I came to you. You are better?

Sir C.—(*Absently.*) Yes, yes, I am well. Why did you leave your home?

Gladys.—Could I stay there after I had forfeited my husband's esteem and love?

Sir C.—What could possibly have made you fancy that?

Gladys.—It was no fancy—how could I hope to retain them, when he knew I was in the studio that night?

Sir C—He did not know it! He never has known it—!

Gladys.—But Mr. Treherne told me——

Sir C.—The liar! Can you not see his motive? to force you into his arms?

Gladys.—Great Heavens, what have I done! What must Arnold think of me! What must you think of me!!

Sir C.—Treherne left the same day as you did. What could we think, but that you had gone together?

Gladys.—(*sinking into chair*) Horrible! Horrible!!!

Sir C.—What in Heaven's name induced you ever to go to his studio?

Gladys.—This letter. (*producing it.*)

Sir C.—Ah, it was for that you went? By George, Ethel was right! I see it all now!—But the envelope?—

Gladys.—That was all he gave me; what matters the envelope?

Sir C.—Don't you see? The letter has neither address nor date—with the envelope we could fix both, and show it was

written before your marriage; without it we can prove nothing. Ah, Gladys, see what your mad infatuation for this man has brought you to!

Gladys.—Infatuation! Oh, no, no, you are wrong, you are wrong! That terrible night dispelled the illusion for ever! The mist lifted from my eyes; I saw clearly how far astray my girlish fancy had led me, and for the first time I realized that I loved my husband! (*Movements of* SIR CHARLES.) Yes, father I love him—I am not the first woman who has not known her own heart, nor who has gained the knowledge too late. Yes! I love him so deeply, that the thought of losing *his* love and esteem almost breaks my heart! What's that? See, (*pointing to window*) the shadow on the wall; there is someone on the balcony! (*moving towards window*)

Sir C.— (*stopping her.*) Stop! *He* is there!

Gladys.—He, Arnold? Father, I cannot, I dare not face him! I should die of grief and shame! Hide me from him, hide me!

Sir C.—But if you are to redeem the past, you must meet him.

Gladys.—Not now! Not now! I could not bear it! Take me away! Take me away! Oh, God, am I losing my reason!

Sir C.—Come, my child, come with me. (*Takes her out by door* R. U. E.)

(ERRINGTON *appears at window on balcony; comes down.*)

Erring.—Sir Charles! (*looks around.*) Gone! And yet I thought I heard voices!

Martin.—(*off.*) I tell you, ma'ma, Sir Charles cannot see anyone to-day, (*Then Enter* MRS. ROLLITT L. C., followed by MARTIN.)

Mrs. R.—(*to* MARTIN.) He will see me—Ah, Mr. Errington!

(ERRINGTON *signs to* MARTIN, *who Exits* L. C.)

Erring.—Mrs. Rollitt!

Mrs. R.—You are surprised to see me, but I always come South this time of the year—(*with pretended impulse*) Mr. Errington, I don't know how to say what I want to say,—

perhaps I am wrong in speaking at all,—but I have such a sincere regard for you, that I cannot let this opportunity pass without telling you how deeply I sympathize with you in your trouble. (ERRINGTON *takes her hand silently.*) And how still more deeply I regret having to some extent been the unwitting cause of it.

Erring.—You, Mrs. Rollitt? How?

Mrs. R.—In having asked *him* to stay at The Firs.

Erring.—Treherne?

Mrs. R.—Believe me, I should never have done so had I not understood from Sir Charles that there never was any real attachment between them.

Erring.—Then Treherne did betray me? And my wife is a partner in his guilt?

Mrs. R.—I thought you knew all—?

Erring.—Answer me—?

Mrs. R.—Mr. Errington—I beg of you!—I cannot—I dare not—!

Erring.—I am answered—!

(*Enter* MARTIN *followed by* TREHERNE R. C.)

Martin.—Mr. Treherne. (*Exit* R. C.)

Mrs. R.—(*Alarmed, aside.*) What folly is this?

(*The two men face each other in silence;* MRS. ROLLITT *looking on anxiously,*)

Erring.—At last we meet! What have you to say?

Tre.—Nothing. Words are unnecessary.

Erring.—Then it is true?

Tre.—Yes.

Erring.—Yes—! A little word, but it means much—your life or mine.

Tre.—When and where you please.

Mrs. R.—(*Intercepting him, aside.*) A duel? I forbid it!

Tre.—(*Aside to her.*) I forgot, an accident to him would upset your plans.

Mrs. R.—Mr. Errington, it's false!—Your wife never left her home with him! (*pointing to* TREHERNE.)

Erring.—Just now, you insinuated the contrary.

Mrs. R.—Let me explain.

(*Enter* SIR CHARLES R. U. E. *He stands at doorway.*)

Tre.—There are some things, Mrs. Rollitt, that don't admit of explanation. (*Coolly.*)

Erring.—As for instance, how honour in some men's minds stands for perfidy, and friendship for treachery—!

Tre.—(*Breaking out furiously.*) Treachery! You dare to talk to me of treachery! You, who took advantage of your wealth and position to steal from me—your friend—the woman he loved, and who loved him—! (ERRINGTON *staggered.*)

Erring.—(*Interrupting.*) You must be mad! Why it was only on the day of your arrival at Denethorpe, that I learnt for the first time that any attachment had existed between you and—my wife—

Sir C.—(*Coming down stage.*) From whom?

Erring.—From Mrs. Rollitt!

Tre.—What! Why! (*Turning to* MRS. ROLLITT.) It was on that very day, you convinced me of *his* treachery!

Mrs. R.—(*Coolly.*) I was mistaken. (*Moves to door* L. C.)

Tre.—(*Bewildered.*) Mistaken—!

Sir C.—(*To* MRS. ROLLITT.) No, you shall not go like this—Through all this cloud of deceit and falsehood, the light of truth begins to dawn—

Erring.—Woman! You have lied to one of us; which is it?

Mrs. R.—If you must know,—to him!

Tre.—To me!—to me! Great Heavens! Then for your own vile purposes you made me believe in a treachery which never existed—a treachery which alone could have afforded some excuse for the schemes of retaliation and revenge which you so infamously fostered in my mind! By so doing, you have humiliated and degraded me in his eyes and my own! (*To* ERRINGTON.) I swear to you, whatever this woman may say, I have wronged you in — intention only —!

Sir C.—Ha! The truth at last!

Mrs. R.—Intention only! (*With a sneer, then turning to* ERRINGTON.) Your immaculate wife will no doubt corroborate his statement. She will no doubt tell you where she hid herself in his studio the night the anonymous letter brought you back from Deneham.

Tre.—Then it was *you* who betrayed us?

Mrs. R.—You see *he* admits the truth of what I say.

Erring.—What am I to believe?

Sir C.—That she is innocent. But she shall speak for herself! (*Opening door*) Gladys!

Mrs. R. } —(*Aside.*) She here!
Tre. }

Erring.—(*Bewildered.*) Gladys!

(GLADYS *enters* R., *supported by* ETHEL; *on seeing* ERRINGTON *she stops short.*)

Gladys.—My husband! Oh, father! *Hides her face on* ETHEL'S *shoulder.*)

Sir C.—(*To* ERRINGTON.) Speak to her.

Erring.—Gladys! An accusation has been made against you that you were in Mr. Treherne's studio the night before you left me.

Gladys.—I am innocent! I have been weak, foolish, but not guilty with that man! Arnold, Arnold! indeed, indeed! I am speaking the truth!

Erring.—Wait! It is not I who accuses you, (*turning suddenly on* MRS. ROLLITT) but this woman! If I tell you of it, it is but that you may hear me say to her face that I do not believe her!—that I love and trust you always!

Gladys.—(*Overcome.*) Ah!—*To* ERRINGTON *who moves towards her.*) No, stand apart from me till I have said what I must say! I am only a woman; very weak, and unworthy to be the wife of one as noble and generous as you, but I should be ten times more unworthy were I to consent by my silence to win my way back to your heart, by a lie—I *was* in the studio that night—

Mrs. R.—Ah! You see—!

Gladys.—But with no evil intention, (*to* MRS. ROLLITT) as no one knows better than you. Oh, if you have a woman's heart, capable, as a woman's heart should be, of sympathy

and compassion, recall your words, and clear me of this suspicion! (MRS. ROLLITT *silent.*) You will not speak?

Tre.—But I will! Mr. Errington, if I have not forfeited all claim to be believed, hear me! The letter I received the day of my arrival at Danethorpe, was from Mrs. Errington, written before her marriage, but which circumstances had prevented reaching me earlier. I loved her, and maddened to find her your wife, by treachery as I believed, I,—to my shame I say it!—threatened her that, unless she would listen to me, I would use it to compromise her. To regain possession of it, she came to the studio that fatal night.

Mrs. R.—(*Sarcastically.*) Which of course proves her immaculate?

Erring.—Can this be true?

Sir C.—Yes, she gave me the letter. (*To* TREHERNE.) The envelope. (TREHERNE, *without a word, hands it to* SIR CHARLES)! Take it, Arnold, and read it. You need not fear to do so.

Erring.—(*Putting letter aside.*) It is unnecessary; I am satisfied my wife has been the victim of a vile and malicious plot! (*To* MRS. ROLLITT.) As for you, what injury have we ever done you that you should have sought to mar our happiness?

Mrs. R.—Look back on those few weeks at Malta. Did it never occur to you that you then raised hopes in my breast, which you afterwards so wantonly destroyed? Then learn it now; and learn too, that a woman such as I, does not readily abandon her love, nor forgive her rival!

Erring.—(*horror-struck.*) You loved her.

Mrs. R.—Yes, I loved you! Then you married, and my love turned to hate—my thoughts to revenge.—I found this man an instrument ready to my hand, and by encouraging his passion for your wife—I hoped to separate you from her, and to take her place. I have failed. It is my sole regret!

(MRS. ROLLITT *looks fixedly and furiously at him and exits* L. C.)

Erring.—Mr. Treherne, henceforth our paths lie wide apart! (TREHERNE *moves to door* L. C.) Gladys! My wife!

(*Takes her in his arms, and kisses her.* SIR CHARLES *sinks into chair with emotion.* ETHEL *standing by him and comforting him.*)

CURTAIN.

(*On Curtain rising again,* LANGTON *has re-entered, and is putting ring on* ETHEL'S *finger.*

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